814

S A F E T Y P I N S

Safety Pins

and other Essays

By

Christopher Morley

STIRLINGSHIRE
Rural Library
EDUCATION AUTHORITY
STIRLING
DISTRICT
LIBRARY

JONATHAN CAPE
THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE LONDON

12975

FIRST PUBLISHED IN MCMXXV
MADE & PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY BUTLER & TANNER LTD
FROME AND
LONDON

CONTENTS

	PAGE
A QUESTION OF PLUMAGE	11
ON UNANSWERING LETTERS	26
THE PERFECT READER	31
ON VISITING BOOKSHOPS	34
FALL FEVER	38
THE ART OF WALKING	42
TIME TO LIGHT THE FURNACE	54
ON MAKING FRIENDS	59
THE TRAGEDY OF WASHINGTON SQUARE	64
17 HERIOT ROW	69
SAFETY-PINS	80
TADPOLES	84
INGO	88
A VENTURE IN MYSTICISM	94
ON GOING TO BED	99
A CASUAL OF THE SEA	103
DAME QUICKLY AND THE BOILROASTER	113
WHAT MEN LIVE BY	118
BROAD STREET STATION	122
THE SHORE IN SEPTEMBER	128
PUTTING THE CITY TO BED	136
1100 WORDS	141
THOUGHTS IN THE SUBWAY	145
GISSING JOINS A COUNTRY CLUB	149
LETTING OUT THE FURNACE	154
THE RETURN TO TOWN	157
ON FILLING AN INK-WELL	162
THE UNIVERSITY AND THE URCHIN	167
SURF FISHING	172

C O N T E N T S

	PAGE
THE APPLE THAT NO ONE ATE	175
THE ANATOMY OF MANHATTAN	180
THE AUTOGENESIS OF A POET	184
HAVE FAITH IN POETS	196
MOBY WALT	201
THE KEY RING	205
FELLOW CRAFTSMEN	209
A JAPANESE BACHELOR	213
TO A NEW YORKER A HUNDRED YEARS HENCE	224
IF BUYING A MEAL WERE LIKE BUYING A HOUSE	227
A MESSAGE FOR BOONVILLE	229
WALT WHITMAN MINIATURES	233
A SEPARATION	248
THE UNWRITTEN BOOK	251
DOORS	254

INTRODUCTION

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY is an essayist. But it is nervous work, this introducing of a mere essayist to an audience which, for all I know, may see little fun in any book not assured of its fiftieth thousand. It is useless to protest that an essay may be as attractive as a green hat worn not too straight. Attractive to whom? To those to whom millinery, however saucy, is no more than another noteworthy feature of the market-place. Unworthy and negligible souls! They do not count. And it is equally useless to remind everybody that the work of Elia went on the remainder market, and that now it is an inexhaustible source of profit to living essayists. It is no good growing impatient with the world because it enjoys a Hyde Park row over Mr. Epstein's tribute to Hudson, though it would never have guessed Rima even in a cross-word puzzle. The wonders of the universe are inexhaustible.

Yet everybody writes essays. That may be the reason for our shyness with that form of literature. The child does essays at school, and then, if provoked, for a brief while assaults editors with them just before it writes its first great novel and discards the unprofitable essay for ever. Everybody knows how to manage the essay, that alluring but not too easy form of prose literature; yet, as publishers know, we very rarely read the blessed stuff. We read few essays but our own, perhaps because we see the good intention behind our own work, and therefore know that the virtue which strangers declare harshly is not there happens to be its chief and obvious merit.

Or strangers may say that though what we call its virtue is seen dimly by them, yet they think it is vice. For if a writer discovers that the essay suits him better than creating fiction does the young maid who prefers such employment to housework, then he had better look out. The essay can be as bad as the day of judgment. If he dares to do it, then we shall know the essayist for what he is. The danger is that he doesn't know what he is. You may write objective poetry, or history, or fiction, and need not trouble to smother your cynical amusement behind your hand. Nobody can see you. But when you have set in order the sentences of an essay, they become a number of reflecting mirrors which betray you inside and out from every point of view. The trouble is, too, that unless it does this it is no good; and more than likely it will be no good in any case. This explains why, though it might be anyone's luck to become a popular novelist, yet the right essay is almost as rare as a personality as fine as Lamb's; and to me it has always seemed that the figure of Elia was the wisest and the strongest even in that astonishing group of poets and friends which included Coleridge.

Then let us admire at least Mr. Morley's courage. He isn't afraid to give himself away. Luckily he is one of those characters who bring good humour to the scene, as well as understanding. Does he give himself away? That but adds another cause for laughter. He joins in. He shows a zest for odd things which never attract the notice of intellectuals, and we find our own shy preferences at once in accord. What, then is it natural for men to love loafing about the quays of a seaport? Or to

show surprise over the movements of minute creatures in a pond over-shadowed by trees? 'Therefore,' says Mr. Morley, 'we celebrate these tapdoles in prose'; and he does. And why not? Apart from the dark doubt that perhaps no writer ever did anything more than celebrate those energetic and transitory blobs, we recall, as we read Mr. Morley, that early wonder of ours over the spring energy of a pond; yet we should feel too proud to confess that we have lost the place in a book of sublime poetry because the tadpoles showed more life.

It is the little things that matter, as Mr. Morley knows. He never has to wait for the inspiration of a great theme; his experience warns him, no doubt, that only the gods know the measure of the importance of anything. But clearly when he cycled as a youth to 17, Heriot Row, Edinburgh, and sat on the doorstep to see if Leerie would come along, the feelings of an explorer who at last camps by the source of a river could go no deeper than his on that auspicious evening. We have all done something like that, and we have all felt as profoundly stirred by it, but it is only when we read Mr. Morley on such an episode that we know we also have lived. Sentimentality? Rather. The same idle triviality caused the crusades; it gave us the Ode to the Nightingale, Amicus Redivivus, David Copperfield, Monsieur Bergeret, the Nigger of the Narcissus, and much besides, for it is memory and affection. Let the intellectuals continue their researches in the mortuary, probing there for the springs of life, and let them suppose their judicious calm to be a virtue and not the sad result of an uninspiring examination of organs which have ceased to function; yet maybe Mr.

Morley got nearer to R.L.S. while sitting, as a lad, on the Edinburgh doorstep. That is the ridiculous way in which innocents are allowed to peep into the secrets. Foolishly, they allow a mere emotion to overmaster them, and then, to the surprise and annoyance of the cool and judicious, they appear able to dispense with our nicely balanced erudition.

H. M. TOMLINSON.

A QUESTION OF PLUMAGE

KENNETH STOCKTON was a man of letters, and correspondingly poor. He was the literary editor of a leading metropolitan daily; but this job only netted him fifty dollars a week, and he was lucky to get that much. The owner of the paper was powerfully in favour of having the reviews done by the sporting editor, and confining them to the books of those publishers who bought advertising space. This simple and statesmanlike view the owner had frequently expressed in Mr. Stockton's hearing, so the latter was never very sure how long his job would continue.

But Mr. Stockton had a house, a wife, and four children in New Utrecht, that very ingenious suburb of Brooklyn. He had worked the problem out to a nicety long ago. If he did not bring home, on the average, eighty dollars a week, his household would cease to revolve. It simply had to be done. The house was still being paid for on the instalment plan. There were plumbers' bills, servant's wages, clothes and schooling for the children, clothes for the wife, two suits a year for himself, and the dues of the Sheepshead Golf Club – his only extravagance. A simple middle-class routine, but one that, once embarked upon, turns into a treadmill. As I say, eighty dollars a week would just cover expenses. To accumulate any savings, pay for life insurance, and entertain friends, Stockton had to rise above that minimum. If in any week he fell below that figure he could not lie in bed at night and 'snort his fill,' as the Elizabethan song naïvely puts it.

There you have the groundwork of many a domestic drama.

Mr. Stockton worked pretty hard at the newspaper office to earn his fifty dollars. He skimmed faithfully all the books that came in, wrote painstaking reviews, and took care to run cuts on his literary page on Saturdays 'to give the stuff kick,' as the proprietor ordered. Though he did so with reluctance, he was forced now and then to approach the book publishers on the subject of advertising. He gave earnest and honest thought to his literary department, and was once praised by Mr. Howells in *Harper's Magazine* for the honourable quality of his criticisms.

But Mr. Stockton, like most men, had only a certain fund of energy and enthusiasm at his disposal. His work on the paper used up the first fruits of his zeal and strength. After that came his article on current poetry, written (unsigned) for a leading imitation literary weekly. The preparation of this involved a careful perusal of at least fifty journals, both American and foreign, and I blush to say it brought him only fifteen dollars a week. He wrote a weekly 'New York Letter' for a Chicago paper of bookish tendencies, in which he told with a flavour of intimacy the goings on of literary men in Manhattan whom he never had time or opportunity to meet. This article was paid for at space rates, which are less in Chicago than in New York. On this count he averaged about six dollars a week.

That brings us up to seventy-one dollars, and also pretty close to the limit of our friend's endurance. The additional ten dollars or so needed for the stability of the Stockton exchequer he earned in various ways. Neighbours in New Utrecht would hear his weary typewriter clacking far into the night. He wrote short stories, of only fair merit; and he wrote 'Sunday stories,' which is the lowest depth to

which a self-respecting lover of literature can fall. Once in a while he gave a lecture on poetry, but he was a shy man, and he never was asked to lecture twice in the same place. By almost incredible exertions of courage and obstinacy he wrote a novel, which was published, and sold 2,580 copies the first year. His royalties on this amounted to $348.30 – not one-third as much, he reflected sadly, as Irvin Cobb would receive for a single short story. He even did a little private tutoring at his home, giving the sons of some of his friends lessons in English literature.

It is to be seen that Mr. Stockton's relatives, back in Indiana, were wrong when they wrote to him admiringly – as they did twice a year – asking for loans, and praising the bold and debonair life of a man of letters in the great city. They did not know that for ten years Mr. Stockton had refused the offers of his friends to put him up for membership at the literary club to which his fancy turned so fondly and so often. He could not afford it. When friends from out of town called on him, he took them to Peck's for a French *table d'hôte*, with an apologetic murmur.

But it is not to be thought that Mr. Stockton was unhappy or discontented. Those who have experienced the excitements of the existence where one lives from hand to mouth and back to hand again, with rarely more than fifty cents of loose change in pocket, know that there is even a kind of pleasurable exhilaration in it. The characters in George Gissing's Grub Street stories would have thought Stockton rich indeed with his fifty-dollar salary. But he was one of those estimable men who have sense enough to give all their money to their wives and keep none in their

trousers. And though his life was arduous and perhaps dull to outward view, he was a passionate lover of books, and in his little box at the back of the newspaper office, smoking a corncob and thumping out his reviews, he was one of the happiest men in New York. His appetite for books was a positive bulimia; how joyful he was when he found time to do a little work on his growing sheaf of literary essays, which he intended to call 'Casual Ablutions,' after the famous sign in the British Museum washroom.

It was Mr. Stockton's custom to take a trolley as far as the Brooklyn Bridge, and thence it was a pleasant walk to the office on Park Row. Generally he left home about ten o'clock, thus avoiding the rush of traffic in the earlier hours; and loitering a little along the way, as becomes a man of ideas, his article on poetry would jell in his mind, and he would be at his desk a little after eleven. There he would work until one o'clock with the happy concentration of those who enjoy their tasks. At that time he would go out for a bite of lunch, and would then be at his desk steadily from two until six. Dinner at home was at seven, and after that he worked persistently in his little den under the roof until past midnight.

One morning in spring he left New Utrecht in a mood of perplexity, for to-day his even routine was in danger of interruption. Half-way across the bridge Stockton paused in some confusion of spirit to look down on the shining river and consider his course.

A few years before this time, in gathering copy for his poetry articles, he had first come across the name of Finsbury Verne in an English journal at the head of

some exquisite verses. From time to time he found more of this writer's lyrics in the English magazines, and at length he had ventured a graceful article of appreciation. It happened that he was the first in this country to recognize Verne's talent, and to his great delight he had one day received a very charming letter from the poet himself, thanking him for his understanding criticism.

Stockton, though a shy and reticent man, had the friendliest nature in the world, and some underlying spirit of kinship in Verne's letter prompted him to warm response. Thus began a correspondence which was a remarkable pleasure to the lonely reviewer, who knew no literary men, although his life was passed among books. Hardly dreaming that they would ever meet, he had insisted on a promise that if Verne should ever visit the States he would make New Utrecht his headquarters. And now, on this very morning, there had come a wireless message via Seagate, saying that Verne was on a ship which would dock that afternoon.

The dilemma may seem a trifling one, but to Stockton's sensitive nature it was gross indeed. He and his wife knew that they could offer but little to make the poet's visit charming. New Utrecht, on the way to Coney Island, is not a likely perching ground for poets; the house was small, shabby, and the spare room had long ago been made into a workshop for the two boys, where they built steam engines and pasted rotogravure pictures from the Sunday editions on the walls. The servant was an enormous coloured mammy, with a heart of ruddy gold, but in appearance she was pure Dahomey. The bathroom plumbing was out of order, the drawing-

room rug was fifteen years old, even the little lawn in front of the house needed trimming, and the gardener would not be round for several days. And Verne had given them only a few hours' notice. How like a poet!

In his letters Stockton had innocently boasted of the pleasant time they would have when the writer should come to visit. He had spoken of evenings beside the fire when they would talk for hours of the things that interest literary men. What would Verne think when he found the hearth only a gas log, and one that had a peculiarly offensive odour? This sickly sweetish smell had become in years of intimacy very dear to Stockton, but he could hardly expect a poet who lived in Well Walk, Hampstead (O Shades of Keats!), and wrote letters from a London literary club, to understand that sort of thing. Why, the man was a grandson of Jules Verne, and probably had been accustomed to refined surroundings all his life. And now he was doomed to plumb the subfusc depths of New Utrecht!

Stockton could not even put him up at a club, as he belonged to none but the golf club, which had no quarters for the entertainment of out-of-town guests. Every detail of his home life was of the shabby, make-shift sort which is so dear to one's self, but needs so much explaining to outsiders. He even thought with a pang of Lorna Doone, the fat, plebeian little mongrel terrier which had meals with the family and slept with the children at night. Verne was probably used to stag-hounds or Zeppelin hounds or something of the sort, he thought humorously. English poets wear an iris halo in the eyes of humble American reviewers. Those god-

like creatures have walked on Fleet Street, have bought books on Paternoster Row, have drunk half-and-half and eaten pigeon pie at the Salutation and Cat, and have probably roared with laughter over some alehouse jest of Mr. Chesterton.

Stockton remembered the photograph Verne had sent him, showing a lean, bearded face with wistful dark eyes against a background of old folios. What would that Olympian creature think of the drudge of New Utrecht, a mere reviewer who sold his editorial copies to pay for shag tobacco!

Well, thought Stockton, as he crossed the bridge, rejoicing not at all in the splendid towers of Manhattan, candescent in the April sun, they had done all they could. He had left his wife telephoning frantically to grocers, cleaning women, and florists. He himself had stopped at the poultry market on his way to the trolley to order two plump fowls for dinner, and had pinched them with his nervous, ink-stained fingers, as ordered by Mrs. Stockton, to test their tenderness. They would send the three younger children to their grandmother, to be interned there until the storm had blown over; and Mrs. Stockton was going to do what she could to take down the rotogravure pictures from the walls of what the boys fondly called the Stockton Art Gallery. He knew that Verne had children of his own: perhaps he would be amused rather than dismayed by the incongruities of their dismantled guest-room. Presumably, the poet was over here for a lecture tour – he would be entertained and fêted everywhere by the cultured rich, for the appreciation which Stockton had started by his

modest little essay had grown to the dimension of a fad.

He looked again at the telegram which had shattered the simple routine of his unassuming life. 'On board *Celtic* dock this afternoon three o'clock hope see you. Verne.' He sneezed sharply, as was his unconscious habit when nervous. In desperation he stopped at a veterinary's office on Frankfort Street, and left orders to have the doctor's assistant call for Lorna Doone and take her away, to be kept until sent for. Then he called at a wine merchant's and bought three bottles of claret of a moderate vintage. Verne had said something about claret in one of his playful letters. Unfortunately, the man's grandfather was a Frenchman, and undoubtedly he knew all about wines.

Stockton sneezed so loudly and so often at his desk that morning that all his associates knew something was amiss. The Sunday editor, who had planned to borrow fifty cents from him at lunch time, refrained from doing so, in a spirit of pure Christian brotherhood. Even Bob Bolles, the hundred-and-fifty-dollar-a-week conductor of 'The Electric Chair,' the paper's humorous column, came in to see what was up. Bob's 'contribs' had been generous that morning, and he was in unusually good humour for a humorist.

'What's the matter, Stock,' he inquired genially. 'Got a cold? Or has George Moore sent in a new novel?'

Stockton looked up sadly from the proofs he was correcting. How could he confess his paltry problem to this debonair creature who wore life lightly, like a flower, and played at literature as he played tennis, with swerve

and speed? Bolles was a bachelor, the author of a successful comedy, and a member of the smart literary club which was over the reviewer's horizon, although in the great ocean of letters the humorist was no more than a surf bather. Stockton shook his head. No one but a married man and an unsuccessful author could understand his trouble.

'A touch of asthma,' he fibbed shyly. 'I always have it at this time of year.'

'Come and have some lunch,' said the other. 'We'll go up to the club and have some ale. That'll put you on your feet.'

'Thanks, ever so much,' said Stockton, 'but I can't do it to-day. Got to make up my page. I tell you what, though –'

He hesitated, and flushed a little.

'Say it,' said Bolles kindly.

'Verne is in town to-day; the English poet, you know. Grandson of old Jules Verne. I'm going to put him up at my house. I wish you'd take him around to the club for lunch some day while he's here. He ought to meet some of the men there. I've been corresponding with him for a long time, and I – I'm afraid I rather promised to take him round there, as though I were a member, you know.'

'Great snakes!' cried Bolles. 'Verne? the author of *Candle Light*? And you're going to put him up? You lucky devil. Why, the man's bigger than Masefield. Take him to lunch – I should say I will! Why, I'll put him in the colyum. Both of you come round there to-morrow and we'll have an orgy. I'll order larks' tongues

and convolvulus salad. I didn't know you knew him.'

'I don't – yet,' said Stockton. 'I'm going down to meet his steamer this afternoon.'

'Well, that's great news,' said the volatile humorist. And he ran downstairs to buy the book of which he had so often heard but had never read.

The sight of Bolles' well-cut suit of tweeds had reminded Stockton that he was still wearing the threadbare serge that had done duty for three winters, and would hardly suffice for the honours to come. Hastily he blue-pencilled his proofs, threw them into the wire basket, and hurried outdoors to see the nearest tailor. He stopped at the bank to draw out fifty dollars for emergencies. Then he entered the first clothier's shop he encountered on Nassau Street.

Mr. Stockton was a nervous man, especially so in the crises when he was compelled to buy anything so important as a suit, for usually Mrs. Stockton supervised the selection. To-day his unlucky star was in the zenith. His watch pointed to close on two o'clock, and he was afraid he might be late for the steamer, which docked far uptown. In his haste, and governed perhaps by some subconscious recollection of the humorist's attractive shaggy tweeds, he allowed himself to be fitted with an ochre-coloured suit of some fleecy checked material grotesquely improper for his unassuming figure. It was the kind of cloth and cut that one sees only in the windows of Nassau Street. Happily he was unaware of the enormity of his offence against society, and rapidly transferring his belongings to the new pockets, he paid down the purchase price and fled to the subway.

When he reached the piers at the foot of Fourteenth Street he saw that the steamer was still in midstream and it would be several minutes before she warped in to the dock. He had no pass from the steamship office, but on showing his newspaperman's card the official admitted him to the pier, and he took his stand at the first cabin gangway, trembling a little with nervousness, but with a pleasant feeling of excitement no less. He gazed at the others waiting for arriving travellers and wondered whether any of the peers of American letters had come to meet the poet. A stoutish, neatly dressed gentleman with a grey moustache looked like Mr. Howells, and he thrilled again. It was hardly possible that he, the obscure reviewer, was the only one who had been notified of Verne's arrival. That tall, hawk-faced man whose limousine was purring outside must be a certain publisher he knew by sight.

What would these gentlemen say when they learned that the poet was to stay with Kenneth Stockton, in New Utrecht? He rolled up the mustard-coloured trousers one more round – they were much too long for him – and watched the great hull slide along the side of the pier with a peculiar tingling shudder that he had not felt since the day of his wedding.

He expected no difficulty in recognizing Finsbury Verne, for he was very familiar with his photograph. As the passengers poured down the slanting gangway, all bearing the unmistakable air and stamp of superiority that marks those who have just left the sacred soil of England, he scanned the faces with an eye of keen regard. To his surprise he saw the gentlemen he had

marked respectively as Mr. Howells and the publisher greet people who had not the slightest resemblance to the poet, and go with them to the customs alcoves. Traveller after traveller hurried past him, followed by stewards carrying luggage; gradually the flow of people thinned, and then stopped altogether, save for one or two invalids who were being helped down the incline by nurses. And still no sign of Finsbury Verne.

Suddenly a thought struck him. Was it possible that – the second class? His eye brightened and he hurried to the gangway, fifty yards farther down the pier, where the second-cabin passengers were disembarking.

There were more of the latter, and the passage-way was still thronged. Just as Stockton reached the foot of the plank a little man in green ulster and deerstalker cap, followed by a plump little woman and four children in single file, each holding fast to the one in front like Alpine climbers, came down the narrow bridge, taking almost ludicrous care not to slip on the cleated boards. To his amazement the reviewer recognized the dark beard and soulful eyes of the poet.

Mr. Verne clutched in rigid arms, not a roll of manuscripts, but a wriggling French poodle, whose tufted tail waved under the poet's chin. The lady behind him, evidently his wife, as she clung steadfastly to the skirt of his ulster, held tightly in the other hand a large glass jar in which two agitated goldfish were swimming, while the four children watched their parents with anxious eyes for the safety of their pets. 'Daddy, look out for Ink!' shrilled one of them, as the struggles of the poodle very nearly sent him into the water under

the ship's side. Two smiling stewards with mountainous portmanteaux followed the party. 'Mother, are Castor and Pollux all right?' cried the smallest child, and promptly fell on his nose on the gangway, disrupting the file.

Stockton, with characteristic delicacy, refrained from making himself known until the Vernes had recovered from the embarrassments of leaving the ship. He followed them at a distance to the 'V' section where they waited for the customs examination. With mingled feelings he saw that Finsbury Verne was no cloud-walking deity, but one even as himself, indifferently clad, shy and perplexed of eye, worried with the comic cares of a family man. All his heart warmed toward the poet, who stood in his bulging great-coat, perspiring and aghast at the uproar around him. He shrank from imagining what might happen when he appeared at home with the whole family, but without hesitation he approached and introduced himself.

Verne's eyes shone with unaffected pleasure at the meeting, and he presented the reviewer to his wife and the children, two boys and two girls. The two boys, aged about ten and eight, immediately uttered cryptic remarks which Stockton judged were addressed to him.

'Castorian!' cried the larger boy, looking at the yellow suit.

'Polluxite!' piped the other in the same breath.

Mrs. Verne, in some embarrassment, explained that the boys were in the throes of a new game they had invented on the voyage. They had created two imaginary countries, named in honour of the goldfish, and it was now their whim to claim for their respective

countries any person or thing that struck their fancy. 'Castoria was first,' said Mrs. Verne, 'so you must consider yourself a citizen of that nation.'

Somewhat shamefaced at this sudden honour, Mr. Stockton turned to the poet. 'You're all coming home with me, aren't you?' he said. 'I got your telegram this morning. We'd be delighted to have you.'

'It's awfully good of you,' said the poet, 'but as a matter of fact we're going straight on to the country to-morrow morning. My wife has some relatives in Yonkers, wherever they are, and she and the children are going to stay with them. I've got to go up to Harvard to give some lectures.'

A rush of cool, sweet relief bathed Stockton's brow.

'Why, I'm disappointed you're going right on,' he stammered. 'Mrs. Stockton and I were hoping –'

'My dear fellow, we could never impose such a party on your hospitality,' said Verne. 'Perhaps you can recommend us to some quiet hotel where we can stay the night.'

Like all New Yorkers, Stockton could hardly think of the name of any hotel when asked suddenly. At first he said the Astor House, and then remembered that it had been demolished years before. At last he recollected that a brother of his from Indiana had once stayed at the Obelisk.

After the customs formalities were over – not without embarrassment, as Mr. Verne's valise when opened displayed several pairs of bright red union suits and a half-empty bottle of brandy – Stockton convoyed them to a taxi. Noticing the frayed sleeve of the poet's ulster

he felt quite ashamed of the aggressive newness of his clothes. And when the visitors whirled away, after renewed promises for a meeting a little later in the spring, he stood for a moment in a kind of daze. Then he hurried toward the nearest telephone booth.

As the Vernes sat at dinner that night in the Abyssinian Room of the Obelisk Hotel, the poet said to his wife: 'It would have been delightful to spend a few days with the Stocktons.'

'My dear,' said she, 'I wouldn't have these wealthy Americans see how shabby we are for anything. The children are positively in rags, and your clothes – well, I don't know what they'll think at Harvard. You know if this lecture trip doesn't turn out well we shall be simply bankrupt.'

The poet sighed. 'I believe Stockton has quite a charming place in the country near New York,' he said.

'That may be so,' said Mrs. Verne. 'But did you ever see such clothes? He looked like a canary.'

ON UNANSWERING LETTERS

THERE are a great many people who really believe in answering letters the day they are received, just as there are people who go to the movies at 9 o'clock in the morning; but these people are stunted and queer.

It is a great mistake. Such crass and breathless promptness takes away a great deal of the pleasure of correspondence.

The psychological didoes involved in receiving letters and making up one's mind to answer them are very complex. If the tangled process could be clearly analysed and its component involutions isolated for inspection we might reach a clearer comprehension of that curious bag of tricks, the efficient Masculine Mind.

Take Bill F., for instance, a man so delightful that even to contemplate his existence puts us in good humour and makes us think well of a world that can exhibit an individual equally comely in mind, body, and estate. Every now and then we get a letter from Bill, and immediately we pass into a kind of trance, in which our mind rapidly enunciates the ideas, thoughts, surmises, and contradictions that we would like to write to him in reply. We think what fun it would be to sit right down and churn the ink-well, spreading speculation and cynicism over a number of sheets of foolscap to be wafted Billward.

Sternly we repress the impulse, for we know that the shock to Bill of getting so immediate a retort would surely unhinge the well-fitted panels of his intellect.

We add his letter to the large delta of unanswered

mail on our desk, taking occasion to turn the mass over once or twice and run through it in a brisk, smiling mood, thinking of all the jolly letters we shall write some day.

After Bill's letter has lain on the pile for a fortnight or so it has been gently silted over by about twenty other pleasantly postponed manuscripts. Coming upon it by chance, we reflect that any specific problems raised by Bill in that manifesto will by this time have settled themselves. And his random speculations upon household management and human destiny will probably have taken a new slant by now, so that to answer his letter in its own tune will not be congruent with his present fevers. We had better bide a wee until we really have something of circumstance to impart.

We wait a week.

By this time a certain sense of shame has begun to invade the privacy of our brain. We feel that to answer that letter now would be an indelicacy. Better to pretend that we never got it. By and by Bill will write again and then we will answer promptly. We put the letter back in the middle of the heap and think what a fine chap Bill is. But he knows we love him, so it doesn't really matter whether we write or not.

Another week passes by, and no further communication from Bill. We wonder whether he does love us as much as we thought. Still – we are too proud to write and ask.

A few days later a new thought strikes us. Perhaps Bill thinks we have died and he is annoyed because he wasn't invited to the funeral. Ought we to wire him? No, because after all we are not dead, and even

if he thinks we are, his subsequent relief at hearing the good news of our survival will outweigh his bitterness during the interval. One of these days we will write him a letter that will really express our heart, filled with all the grindings and gear-work of our mind, rich in affection and fallacy. But we had better let it ripen and mellow for a while. Letters, like wines, accumulate bright fumes and bubblings if kept under cork.

Presently we turn over that pile of letters again. We find in the lees of the heap two or three that have gone for six months and can safely be destroyed. Bill is still on our mind, but in a pleasant, dreamy kind of way. He does not ache or twinge us as he did a month ago. It is fine to have old friends like that and keep in touch with them. We wonder how he is and whether he has two children or three. Splendid old Bill!

By this time we have written Bill several letters in imagination and enjoyed doing so, but the matter of sending him an actual letter has begun to pall. The thought no longer has the savour and vivid sparkle it had once. When one feels like that it is unwise to write. Letters should be spontaneous outpourings: they should never be undertaken merely from a sense of duty. We know that Bill wouldn't want to get a letter that was dictated by a feeling of obligation.

Another fortnight or so elapsing, it occurs to us that we have entirely forgotten what Bill said to us in that letter. We take it out and con it over. Delightful fellow! It is full of his own felicitous kinks of whim, though some of it sounds a little old-fashioned by now, It seems a bit stale, has lost some of its freshness and

surprise. Better not answer it just yet, for Christmas will soon be here and we shall have to write then anyway. We wonder, can Bill hold out until Christmas without a letter?

We have been re-reading some of those imaginary letters to Bill that have been dancing in our head. They are full of all sorts of fine stuff. If Bill ever gets them he will know how we love him. To use O. Henry's immortal joke, we have days of Damon and Knights of Pythias writing those uninked letters to Bill. A curious thought has come to us. Perhaps it would be better if we never saw Bill again. It is very difficult to talk to a man when you like him so much. It is much easier to write in the sweet fantastic strain. We are so inarticulate when face to face. If Bill comes to town we will leave word that we have gone away. Good old Bill! He will always be a precious memory.

A few days later a sudden frenzy sweeps over us, and though we have many pressing matters on hand, we mobilize pen and paper and literary shock troops and prepare to hurl several battalions at Bill. But, strangely enough, our utterance seems stilted and stiff. We have nothing to say. *My dear Bill*, we begin, *it seems a long time since we heard from you. Why don't you write? We still love you, in spite of all your shortcomings.*

That doesn't seem very cordial. We muse over the pen and nothing comes. Bursting with affection, we are unable to say a word.

Just then the 'phone rings. 'Hello?' we say.

It is Bill, come to town unexpectedly.

'Good old fish!' we cry, ecstatic. 'Meet you at

the corner of Tenth and Chestnut in five minutes.'

We tear up the unfinished letter. Bill will never know how much we love him. Perhaps it is just as well. It is very embarrassing to have your friends know how you feel about them. When we meet him we will be a little bit on our guard. It would not be well to be betrayed into any extravagance of cordiality.

And perhaps a not altogether false little story could be written about a man who never visited those most dear to him, because it troubled him so to say good-bye when he had to leave.

THE PERFECT READER

On Christmas Eve, while the Perfect Reader sits in his arm-chair immersed in a book – so absorbed that he has let the fire go out – I propose to slip gently down the chimney and leave this tribute in his stocking. It is not a personal tribute. I speak, on behalf of the whole fraternity of writers, this word of gratitude – and envy.

No one who has ever done any writing, or has any ambition toward doing so, can ever be a Perfect Reader. Such a one is not disinterested. He reads, inevitably, in a professional spirit. He does not surrender himself with complete willingness of enjoyment. He reads 'to see how the other fellow does it'; to note the turn of a phrase, the cadence of a paragraph; carrying on a constant subconscious comparison with his own work. He broods constantly as to whether he himself, in some happy conjuncture of quick mind and environing silence and the sudden perfect impulse, might have written something like that. He is (poor devil) confessedly selfish. On every page he is aware of his own mind running with him, tingling him with needle-pricks of conscience for the golden chapters he has never written. And so his reading is, in a way, the perfection of exquisite misery – and his writing also. When he writes, he yearns to be reading; when he reads, he yearns to be writing.

But the Perfect Reader, for whom all fine things are written, knows no such delicate anguish. When he reads, it is without any *arrière pensée*, any twingeing

consciousness of self. I like to think of one Perfect Reader of my acquaintance. He is a seafaring man, and this very evening he is in his bunk, at sea, the day's tasks completed. Over his head is a suitable electric lamp. In his mouth is a pipe with that fine wine-dark mahogany sheen that resides upon excellent briar of many years' service. He has had (though I speak only by guess) a rummer of hot toddy to celebrate the greatest of all Evenings. At his elbow is a porthole, brightly curtained with a scrap of clean chintz, and he can hear the swash of the seas along his ship's tall side. And now he is reading. I can see him reading. I know just how his mind feels! Oh, the Perfect Reader! There is not an allusion that he misses; in all those lovely printed words he sees the subtle secrets that a lesser soul would miss. He (bless his heart!) is not thinking how he himself would have written it; his clear, keen, outreaching mind is intent only to be one in spirit with the invisible and long-dead author. I tell you, if there is anywhere a return of the vanished, it is then, at such moments, over the tilted book held by the Perfect Reader.

And how quaint it is that he should diminish himself so modestly. 'Of course' (he says), 'I'm only a Reader, and I don't know anything about writing–' Why, you adorable creature, *You* are our court of final appeal, you are the one we come to, humbly, to know whether, anywhere in our miserable efforts to set out our unruly hearts in parallel lines, we have done an honest thing. What do we care for what (most of) the critics say? They (we know only too well) are not criticizing *us*, but, unconsciously, themselves. They skew their own

dreams into their comment, and blame us for not writing what they once wanted to. You we can trust, for you have looked at life largely and without pettifogging qualms. The parallel lines of our eager pages meet at Infinity – that is, in the infinite understanding and judgment of the Perfect Reader.

The enjoyment of literature is a personal communion; it cannot be outwardly instilled. The utmost the critic can do is read the marriage service over the reader and the book. The union is consummated, if at all, in secret. But now and then there comes up the aisle a new Perfect Reader, and all the ghosts of literature wait for him, starry-eyed, by the altar. And as long as there are Perfect Readers, who read with passion, with glory, and then speed to tell their friends, there will always be, ever and anon, a Perfect Writer.

And so, dear Perfect Reader, a Merry Christmas to you and a New Year of books worthy your devotion! When you revive from that book that holds you in spell, and find this little note on the cold hearth, I hope you may be pleased.

ON VISITING BOOKSHOPS

It is a curious thing that so many people only go into a bookshop when they happen to need some particular book. Do they never drop in for a little innocent carouse and refreshment? There are some knightly souls who even go so far as to make their visits to bookshops a kind of chivalrous errantry at large. They go in not because they need any certain volume, but because they feel that there may be some book that needs them. Some wistful, little forgotten sheaf of loveliness, long pining away on an upper shelf – why not ride up, fling her across your charger (or your charge account), and gallop away. Be a little knightly, you booklovers!

The lack of intelligence with which people use bookshops is, one supposes, no more flagrant than the lack of intelligence with which we use all the rest of the machinery of civilization. In this age, and particularly in this city, we haven't time to be intelligent.

A queer thing about books, if you open your heart to them, is the instant and irresistible way they follow you with their appeal. You know at once, if you are clairvoyant in these matters (*libre-voyant*, one might say), when you have met your book. You may dally and evade, you may go on about your affairs, but the paragraph of prose your eye fell upon, or the snatch of verses, or perhaps only the spirit and flavour of the volume, more divined than reasonably noted, will follow you. A few lines glimpsed on a page may alter your whole trend of thought for the day, reverse the currents of the mind, change the profile of the city. The other evening,

in a subway car, we were reading Walter de la Mare's interesting little essay about Rupert Brooke. His discussion of children, their dreaming ways, their exalted simplicity and absorption, changed the whole tenor of our voyage by some magical chemistry of thought. It was no longer a wild, barbaric struggle with our fellowmen, but a venture of faith and recompense, taking us home to the bedtime of a child.

The moment when one meets a book and knows, beyond shadow of doubt, that that book must be his – not necessarily now, but some time – is among the happiest excitements of the spirit. An indescribable virtue effuses from some books. One can feel the radiations of an honest book long before one sees it, if one has a sensitive pulse for such affairs. Its honour and truth will speak through the advertising. Its mind and heart will cry out even underneath the extravagance of jacket-blurbings. Some shrewd soul, who understands books, remarked some time ago on the editorial page of the *Sun's* book review that no superlative on a jacket had ever done the book an atom of good. He was right, as far as the true bookster is concerned. We choose our dinner not by the wrappers, but by the veining and gristle of the meat within. The other day, prowling about a bookshop, we came upon two paper-bound copies of a little book of poems by Alice Meynell. They had been there for at least two years. We had seen them before, a year or more ago, but had not looked into them, fearing to be tempted. This time we ventured. We came upon two poems – 'To O, Of Her Dark Eyes,' and 'A Wind of Clear Weather in England.' The book was ours – or

rather, we were its, though we did not yield at once. We came back the next day and got it. We are still wondering how a book like that could stay in the shop so long. Once we had it, the day was different. The sky was sluiced with a clearer blue, air and sunlight blended for a keener intake of the lungs, faces seen along the street moved us with a livelier shock of interest and surprise. The wind that moved over Sussex and blew Mrs. Meynell's heart into her lines was still flowing across the ribs and ledges of our distant scene.

There is no mistaking a real book when one meets it. It is like falling in love, and like that colossal adventure it is an experience of great social import. Even as the tranced swain, the booklover yearns to tell others of his bliss. He writes letters about it, adds it to the postscript of all manner of communications, intrudes it into telephone messages, and insists on his friends writing down the title of the find. Like the simple-hearted betrothed, once certain of his conquest, 'I want you to love her, too!' It is a jealous passion also. He feels a little indignant if he finds that anyone else has discovered the book also. He sees an enthusiastic review – very likely in *The New Republic* – and says, with great scorn, 'I read the book three months ago.' There are even some perversions of passion by which a booklover loses much of his affection for his pet if he sees it too highly commended by some rival critic.

This sharp ecstasy of discovering books for one's self is not always widespread. There are many who, for one reason or another, prefer to have their books found out for them. But for the complete zealot nothing transcends

the zest of pioneering for himself. And therefore working for a publisher is, to a certain type of mind, a never-failing fascination. As H. M. Tomlinson says in *Old Junk*, that fascinating collection of sensitive and beautifully poised sketches which came to us recently with a shock of thrilling delight:

'To come upon a craft rigged so, though at her moorings and with sails furled, her slender poles upspringing from the bright plane of a brimming harbour, is to me as rare and sensational a delight as the re-discovery, when idling with a book, of a favourite lyric.'

To read just that passage, and the phrase *the bright plane of a brimming harbour*, is one of those 'rare and sensational delights' that set the mind moving on lovely journeys of its own, and mark off visits to a bookshop not as casual errands of reason, but as necessary acts of devotion. We visit bookshops not so often to buy any one special book, but rather to re-discover, in the happier and more expressive words of others, our own encumbered soul.

FALL FEVER

About this time of year, when the mellow air swoons (as the poets say) with golden languor and the landscape is tinged a soft brown like a piece of toast, we feel the onset and impeachment of fall fever.

Fall fever is (in our case at any rate) more insidious than the familiar disease of spring. Spring fever impels us to get out in the country; to seize a knotted cudgel and a pouchful of tobacco and agitate our limbs over the landscape. But the drowsiness of autumn is a lethargy in the true sense of that word – a forgetfulness. A forgetfulness of past discontents and future joys; a forgetfulness of toil that is gone and leisure to come; a mere breathing existence in which one stands vacantly eyeing the human scene, living in a gentle simmer of the faculties like a boiling kettle when the gas is turned low.

Fall fever, one supposes, is our inheritance from the cave man, who (like the bear and the – well, some other animal, whatever it is) went into hibernation about the first of November. Autumn with its soft inertia lulled him to sleep. He ate a hearty meal, raked together some dry leaves, curled up and slid off until the alarm clock of April.

This agreeable disease does not last very long with the modern man. He fights bravely against it; then the frost comes along, or the coal bill, and stings him into activity. But for a few days its genial torpor may be seen (by the observant) even in our bustling modern career. When we read yesterday that Judge Audenried's

court clerks had fallen asleep during ballot-counting proceedings we knew that the microbe was among us again. Keats, in his lovely Ode, describes the figure of Autumn as stretched out 'on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep.' Unhappily the conventions forbid city dwellers from curling up on the pavements for a cheerful nap. If one were brave enough to do so, unquestionably many would follow his example. But the urbanite has taught himself to doze upright. You may see many of us, standing dreamily before Chestnut Street show windows in the lunch hour, to all intents and purposes in a state of slumber. Yesterday, in that lucid shimmer of warmth and light, a group stood in front of a doughnut window near Ninth Street: not one of them was more than half awake. Similarly a gathering watched the three small birds who have become a traditional window ornament on Chestnut Street (they have recently moved from an oculist to a correspondence course office) and a faint whisper of snoring arose on the sultry air. The customs of city life permit a man to stand still as long as he likes if he will only pretend to be watching something. We saw a substantial burgher pivoted by the window of Mr. Albert, the violin maker, on Ninth Street. Apparently he was studying the fine autographed photo of Patti there displayed; but when we sidled near we saw that his eyes were closed; this admirable person, who seemed to be what is known as a 'busy executive,' and whose desk undoubtedly carries a plate-glass sheet with the orisons of Swett Marden under it, was in a blissful doze.

Modern life (as we say) struggles against this sweet enchantment of autumn, but Nature is too strong for

us. Why is it that all these strikes occur just at this time of year? The old hibernating instinct again, perhaps. The workman has a subconscious yearning to scratch together a nice soft heap of manilla envelopes and lie down on that couch for a six months' ear-pounding. There are all sorts of excuses that one can make to one's self for waving farewell to toil. Only last Sunday we saw this ad. in a paper:

'HEIRS WANTED. The war is over and has made many new heirs. You may be one of them. Investigate. Many now living in poverty are rich, but don't know it.'

Now what could be simpler (we said to ourself as we stood contemplating those doughnuts) than to forsake our jolly old typewriter and spend a few months in 'investigating' whether anyone had made us his heir? It might be. Odd things have happened. Down in Washington Square, for instance (we thought), are a number of sun-warmed benches, very reposeful to the sedentary parts, on which we might recline and think over the possibility of our being rich unawares. We hastened thither, but apparently many had had the same idea. There was not a bench vacant. The same was true in Independence Square and in Franklin Square. We will never make a good loafer. There is too much competition.

So we came back, sadly, to our roll-top and fell to musing. We picked up a magazine and found some pictures showing how Mary Pickford washes her hair. 'If I am sun-drying my hair,' said Mary (under a photo showing her reclining in a lovely garden doing just that), 'I usually

have the opportunity to read a scenario or do some other duty which requires concentration.' And it occurred to us that if a strain like that is put upon a weak woman we surely ought to be able to go on moiling for a while, Indian summer or not. And then we found some pictures by our favourite artist, Coles Phillips, with that lovely shimmer around the ankles, and we resolved to be strong and brave and have pointed finger-nails. But still, in the back of our mind, the debilitating influence of fall fever was at work. We said to ourself, without the slightest thought of printing it (for it seemed to put us in a false light), that the one triumphant and unanswerable epigram of mankind, the grandest and most resolute utterance in the face of implacable fate, is the snore.

'THERE was fine walking on the hills in the direction of the sea.'

This heart-stirring statement, which I find in an account of the life of William and Dorothy Wordsworth when they inhabited a quiet cottage near Crewkerne in Dorset, reminds me how often the word 'walking' occurs in any description of Wordsworth's existence. De Quincey assures us that the poet's props were very ill-shapen – 'they were pointedly condemned by all female connoisseurs in legs' – but none the less he was *princeps arte ambulandi*. Even had he lived to-day, when all our roads are barbarized by exploding gasoline vapours, I do not think Wordsworth would have flivvered. Of him the Opium Eater made the famous pronouncement: 'I calculate that with these identical legs W. must have traversed a distance of 175,000 to 180,000 English miles – a mode of exertion which, to him, stood in the stead of alcohol and all other stimulants whatsoever to the animal spirits; to which, indeed, he was indebted for a life of unclouded happiness, and we for much of what is most excellent in his writings.'

A book that says anything about walking has a ready passage to my inmost heart. The best books are always those that set down with 'amorous precision' the satisfying details of human pilgrimage. How one sympathizes with poor Pepys in his outburst (April 30, 1663) about a gentleman who seems to have been 'Always Taking the Joy Out of Life':

'Lord! what a stir Stankes makes, with his being crowded

in the streets, and wearied in walking in London, and would not be wooed to go to a play, nor to Whitehall, or to see the lions, though he was carried in a coach. I never could have thought there had been upon earth a man so little curious in the world as he is.'

Now your true walker is mightily 'curious in the world,' and goes upon his way zealous to sate himself with a thousand quaintnesses. When he writes a book he fills it full of food, drink, tobacco, the scent of sawmills on sunny afternoons, and arrivals at inns late at night. Diaries and letters are often best of all because they abound in these matters. And because walking can never again be what it was – the motor-cars will see to that – it is our duty to pay it greater reverence and honour.

Wordsworth and Coleridge come first to mind in any talk about walking. The first time they met was in 1797, when Coleridge tramped from Nether Stowey to Racedown (thirty miles in an air-line, and full forty by road) to make the acquaintance of William and Dorothy. That is practically from the Bristol Channel to the English ditto, a rousing stretch. It was Wordsworth's pamphlet describing a walk across France to the Alps that spurred Coleridge on to this expedition. The trio became fast friends, and William and Dorothy moved to Alfoxden (near Nether Stowey) to enjoy the companionship. What one would give for some adequate account of their walks and talks together over the Quantocks. They planned a little walking trip into Devonshire that autumn (1797) and *The Ancient Mariner* was written in the hope of defraying the expenses of the adventure.

De Quincey himself, who tells us so much jovial gossip about Wordsworth and Coleridge, was no mean pedestrian. He describes a forty-mile all-night walk from Bridgwater to Bristol, on the evening after first meeting Coleridge. He could not sleep after the intellectual excitement of the day, and through a summer night 'divinely calm' he busied himself with meditation on the sad spectacle he had witnessed: a great mind hastening to decay.

I have always fancied that walking as a fine art was not much practised before the eighteenth century. We know from Ambassador Jusserand's famous book how many wayfarers were on the roads in the fourteenth century, but none of these were abroad for the pleasures of moving meditation and scenery. We can gather from Mr. Tristram's *Coaching Days and Coaching Ways* that the highroads were by no means safe for solitary travellers even so late as 1750. In *Joseph Andrews* (1742) whenever any of the characters proceed afoot they are almost certain to be held up. Mr. Izaak Walton, it is true, was a considerable rambler a century earlier than this, and in his Derbyshire hills must have passed many lonely gullies; but footpads were more likely to ambush the main roads. It would be a hard-hearted bandit who would despoil the gentle angler of his basket of trout. Goldsmith, too, was a lusty walker, and tramped it over the Continent for two years (1754–6) with little more baggage than a flute: he might have written *The Handy Guide for Beggars* long before Vachel Lindsay. But generally speaking, it is true that cross-country walks for the pure delight of rhythmically placing one foot before the other were rare before Wordsworth. I

always think of him as one of the first to employ his legs as an instrument of philosophy.

After Wordsworth they come thick and fast. Hazlitt, of course – have you paid the tax that R.L.S. imposes on all who have not read Hazlitt's *On Going A Journey*? Then Keats: never was there a more fruitful walk than the early morning stroll from Clerkenwell to the Poultry in October, 1816, that produced *Much have I travelled in the realms of gold*. He must have set out early enough, for the manuscript of the sonnet was on Cowden Clarke's table by breakfast time. And by the way, did you know that the copy of Chapman's *Homer* which inspired it belonged to the financial editor of *The Times*? Never did financial editor live to better purpose.

There are many words of Keats that are a joyful viaticum for the walker: get these by rote in some membrane of memory:

'The great Elements we know of are no mean comforters: the open sky sits upon our senses like a sapphire crown – the Air is our robe of state – the Earth is our throne, and the sea a mighty minstrel playing before it.'

The Victorians were great walkers. Railways were but striplings; inns were at their prime. Hark to the great names in the walker's Hall of Fame: Tennyson, FitzGerald, Matthew Arnold, Carlyle, Kingsley, Meredith, Richard Jefferies. What walker can ever forget the day when he first read *The Story of My Heart*? In my case it was the 24th of August, 1912, on a train from London to Cambridge. Then there were George Borrow, Emily Brontë on her Yorkshire moors, and Leslie Stephen, one

of the princes of the clan and founder of the famous Sunday Tramps of whom Meredith was one. Walt Whitman would have made a notable addition to that posse of philosophic walkers, save that I fear the garrulous old pagan would have been disappointed that he could not dominate the conversation.

There have been stout walkers in our own day. Mr. W. H. Davies (the Super-Tramp), G. M. Trevelyan, Hilaire Belloc, Edward Thomas, who died on the field of honour in April, 1917, and Francis Ledwidge, who was killed in Flanders. Who can forget his noble words, 'I have taken up arms for the fields along the Boyne, for the birds and the blue sky over them.' There is Walter Prichard Eaton, the Jefferies of our own Berkshires. One could extend the list almost without end. Sometimes it seems as though literature were a co-product of legs and head.

Charles Lamb and Leigh Hunt were great city ramblers, followed in due course by Dickens, R.L.S., Edward Lucas, Holbrook Jackson, and Pearsall Smith. Mr. Thomas Burke is another, whose *Nights in Town* will delight the lover of the greatest of all cities. But urban wanderings, delicious as they are, are not quite what we mean by walking. On pavements one goes by fit and start, halting to see, to hear, and to speculate. In the country one captures the true ecstasy of the long, unbroken swing, the harmonious glow of mind and body, eyes fed, soul feasted, brain and muscle exercised alike.

Meredith is perhaps the Supreme Pontiff of modern country walkers: no soft lover of drowsy golden weather, but master of the stiffer breed who salute frost and lashing rain and roaring south-west wind, who leap to grapple with

the dissolving riddles of destiny. February and March are his months:

> For love we Earth, then serve we all;
> Her mystic secret then is ours:
> We fall, or view our treasures fall,
> Unclouded, as beholds her flowers,
>
> Earth, from a night of frosty wreck,
> Enrobed in morning's mounted fire,
> When lowly, with a broken neck,
> The crocus lays her cheek to mire.

I suppose every walker collects a few precious books which form the bible of his chosen art. I have long been collecting a Walker's Breviary of my own. It includes Stevenson's *Walking Tours*, G. M. Trevelyan's *Walking*, Leslie Stephen's *In Praise of Walking*, shards and crystals from all the others I have mentioned. Michael Fairless, Vachel Lindsay, and Frank Sidgwick have place in it. On my private shelf stands *Journeys to Bagdad* by Mr. Charles Brooks, who has good pleasantry to utter on this topic; and a manly little volume, *Walking as Education*, by the Rev. A. N. Cooper, 'the walking parson,' published in England in 1910. On that same shelf there will soon stand a volume of delicious essays by one of the most accomplished of American walkers, Mr. Robert Cortes Holliday, whose *Walking Stick Papers* has beckoned to the eye of a far-seeing publisher. Mr. Holliday it is who has bravely stated why so few of the fair sex are able to participate in walking tours:

'No one, though (this is the first article to be observed), should ever go a journey with any other than him with whom one walks arm in arm, in the evening, the twilight, and, talking (let us suppose) of men's given names, agrees that if either should have a son he shall be named after the other. Walking in the gathering dusk, two and two, since the world began, there have always been young men who have thus to one another plighted their troth. If one is not still one of these, then, in the sense here used, journeys are over for him. What is left to him of life he may enjoy, but not journeys. Mention should be made in passing that some have been found so ignorant of the nature of journeys as to suppose that they might be taken in company with members, or a member, of the other sex. Now, one who writes of journeys would cheerfully be burned at the stake before he would knowingly underestimate women. But it must be confessed that it is another season in the life of man that they fill.

'They are too personal for the high enjoyment of going a journey. They must forever be thinking about you or about themselves; with them everything in the world is somehow tangled up in these matters; and when you are with them (you cannot help it, or if you could they would not allow it) you must forever be thinking about them or yourself. Nothing on either side can be seen detached. They cannot rise to that philosophic plane of mind which is the very marrow of going a journey. One reason for this is that they can never escape from the idea of society. You are in their society, they are in yours; and the multitudinous personal ties which connect you all to that great order called society that you have for a period got away from

physically are present. Like the business man who goes on a vacation from his business and takes his business habits along with him, so on a journey they would bring society along, and all sort of etiquette.

'He that goes a journey shakes off the trammels of the world; he has fled all impediments and inconveniences; he belongs, for the moment, to no time or place. He is neither rich nor poor, but in that which he thinks he sees. There is not such another Arcadia for this on earth as in going a journey. He that goes a journey escapes, for a breath of air, from all conventions; without which, though, of course, society would go to pot; and which are the very natural instinct of women.'

Mr. Holliday has other goodly matter upon the philosophy and art of locomotion, and those who are wise and have a lively faith may be admitted to great and surpassing delights if they will here and now make memorandum to buy his book, which will soon be published.

Speaking of Vachel Lindsay, his *Handy Guide for Beggars* will bring an itch along the shanks of those who love shoe-leather and a knobbed stick. Vachel sets out for a walk in no mean and pettifogging spirit: he proceeds as an army with banners: he intends that the world shall know he is afoot: the Great Khan of Springfield is unleashed – let alewives and deacons tremble!

Ungenerous hosts have cozened Vachel by begging him to recite his poems at the beginning of each course, in the meantime getting on with their eating; but despite the *naïveté* of his eagerness to sing, there is a plain and manly simplicity about Vachel that delights us all. We like to

know that here is a poet who has wrestled with poverty, who never wrote a Class Day poem at Harvard, who has worn frayed collars or none at all, and who lets the barber shave the back of his neck. We like to know that he has tramped the ties in Georgia, harvested in Kansas, been fumigated in New Jersey, and lives contented in Illinois. Four weeks a year he lives as the darling of the cisalleghany Browning Societies, but he is always glad to get back to Springfield and resume his robes as the local Rabindranath. If he ever buys an automobile I am positive it will be a Ford. Here is *homo americanus*, one of ourselves, who never wore spats in his life.

But even the plain man may see visions. Walking on crowded city streets at night, watching the lighted windows, delicatessen shops, peanut carts, bakeries, fish stalls, free lunch counters piled with crackers and saloon cheese, and minor poets struggling home with the Saturday night marketing – he feels the thrill of being one, or at least two-thirds, with this various, grotesque, pathetic, and surprising humanity. The sense of fellowship with every other walking biped, the full-blooded understanding that Whitman and O. Henry knew in brimming measure, comes by gulps and twinges to almost all. That is the essence of Lindsay's feeling about life. He loves crowds, companionship, plenty of sirloin and onions, and seeing his name in print. He sings and celebrates the great symbols of our hodge-podge democracy: ice-cream soda, electrical skysigns, Sunday School picnics, the movies, Mark Twain. In the teeming ooze and ocean bottoms of our atlantic humanity he finds rich corals and rainbow shells, hospitality, reverence, love, and beauty.

This is the sentiment that makes a merry pedestrian, and Vachel has scrutineered and scuffled through a dozen states, lightening larders, and puzzling the worldly. Afoot and penniless is his technique – 'stopping when he had a mind to, singing when he felt inclined to' – and begging his meals and bed. I suppose he has had as many free meals as any American citizen; and this is how he does it, copied from his little pamphlet used on many a road:

RHYMES TO BE TRADED FOR BREAD

Being new verses by Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, Springfield, Illinois, June, 1912, printed expressly as a substitute for money.

This book is to be used in exchange for the necessities of life on a tramp-journey from the author's home town, through the West and back, during which he will observe the following rules:

(1) Keep away from the cities.
(2) Keep away from the railroads.
(3) Have nothing to do with money. Carry no baggage.
(4) Ask for dinner about quarter after eleven.
(5) Ask for supper, lodging, and breakfast about quarter of five.
(6) Travel alone.
(7) Be neat, truthful, civil, and on the square.
(8) Preach the Gospel of Beauty.

In order to carry out the last rule there will be three exceptions to the rule against baggage. (1) The author will carry a brief printed statement, called *The Gospel of Beauty*. (2) He will carry this book of rhymes for distribution. (3) Also he will carry a small portfolio with

pictures, etc., chosen to give an outline of his view of the history of art, especially as it applies to America.

Perhaps I have tarried too long over Vachel; but I have set down his theories of vagabonding because many walkers will find them interesting. *The Handy Guide for Beggars* will leave you footsore, but better for the exercise. And when the fascinating story of American literature in this decade (1910–20) is finally written, there will be a happy and well-merited corner in it for a dusty but 'neat, truthful, and civil' figure from Springfield, Illinois.

A good pipeful of prose to solace yourself withal, about sunset on a lonely road, is that passage on 'Lying Awake at Night' to be found in *The Forest*, by Stewart Edward White. Major White is one of the best friends the open-air walker has, and don't forget it!

The motors have done this for us at least, that as they have made the highways their own beyond dispute, walking will remain the mystic and private pleasure of the secret and humble few. For us the byways, the footpaths, and the pastures will be sanctified and sweet. Thank Heaven there are still gentle souls uncorrupted by the victrola and the limousine. In our old trousers and our easy shoes, with pipe and stick, we can do our fifteen miles between lunch and dinner, and glorify the ways of God to man.

And sometimes, about two o'clock of an afternoon (these spells come most often about half an hour after lunch), the old angel of peregrination lifts himself up in me, and I yearn and wamble for a season afoot. When a blue air is moving keenly through bare boughs this angel is most

vociferous. I gape wanly round the lofty citadel where I am pretending to earn the Monday afternoon envelope. The filing case, thermostat, card index, typewriter, automatic telephone: these ingenious anodynes avail me not. Even the visits of golden nymphs, sweet ambassadors of commerce, who rustle in and out of my room with memoranda, mail, manuscripts, aye, even these lightfoot figures fail to charm. And the mind goes out to the endless vistas of streets, roads, fields, and rivers that summon the wanderer with laughing voice. Somewhere a great wind is scouring the hillsides; and once upon a time a man set out along the Great North Road to walk to Royston in the rain.

Grant us, O Zeus! the tingling tremor of thigh and shank that comes of a dozen sturdy miles laid underheel. Grant us 'fine walking on the hills in the direction of the sea'; or a winding road that tumbles down to some Cotswold village. Let an inn parlour lie behind red curtains, and a table be drawn toward the fire. Let there be a loin of cold beef, an elbow of yellow cheese, a tankard of dog's nose. Then may we prop our Bacon's Essays against the pewter and study those mellow words: 'Certainly it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.' *Haec studia pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur.*

TIME TO LIGHT THE FURNACE

THE 28th of October. Coal nine dollars a ton. Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell had made a resolution not to start the furnace until Thanksgiving. And in the biting winds of Long Island that requires courage.

Commuters the world over are a hardy, valorous race. The Arab commutes by dromedary, the Malay by raft, the Indian rajah by elephant, the African chief gets a team of his mothers-in-law to tow him to the office. But wherever you find him, the commuter is a tough and tempered soul, inured to privation and calamity. At seven-thirty in the morning he leaves his bungalow, tent, hut, palace, or kraal, and tells his wife he is going to work.

How the winds whistle and moan over those Long Island flats! Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell had laid in fifteen tons of black diamonds. And hoping that would be enough, they were zealous not to start the furnace until the last touchdown had been made.

But every problem has more than one aspect. Belinda, the new cook, had begun to work for them on the 5th of October. Belinda came from the West Indies, a brown maiden still unspoiled by the sophistries of the employment agencies. She could boil an egg without cracking it, she could open a tin can without maiming herself. She was neat, guileless, and cheerful. But she was accustomed to a warm climate.

The 28th of October. As Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell sat at dinner, Mr. Blackwell buttoned his coat, and began a remark about how chilly the evenings were growing. But across the table came one of those glances familiar

to indiscreet husbands. Passion-distorted, vibrant with rebuke, charged with the lightning of instant dissolution, Mrs. Blackwell's gaze struck him dumb with alarm. Husbands, husbands, you know that gaze!

Mr. Blackwell kept silence. He ate heartily, choosing foods rich in calories. He talked of other matters, and accepted thankfully what Belinda brought to him. But he was chilly, and a vision of coal bills danced in his mind.

After dinner he lit the open fire in the living-room, and he and Mrs. Blackwell talked in discreet tones. Belinda was merrily engaged in washing the dishes.

'Bob, you consummate blockhead!' said Mrs. Blackwell, 'haven't you better sense than to talk about its being chilly? These last few days Belinda has done nothing but complain about the cold. She comes from Barbados, where the thermometer never goes below sixty. She said she couldn't sleep last night, her room was so cold. I've given her my old fur coat and the steamer rug from your den. One other remark like that of yours and she'll leave. For Heaven's sake, Bob, use your skull!'

Mr. Blackwell gazed at her in concern. The deep, calculating wisdom of women was made plain to him. He ventured no reply.

Mrs. Blackwell was somewhat softened by his docility.

'You don't realize, dear,' she added, 'how servants are affected by chance remarks they overhear. The other day you mentioned the thermometer, and the next morning I found Belinda looking at it. If you must say anything about the temperature, complain of the heat. Otherwise we'll have to start the furnace at once.'

Mr. Blackwell's face was full of the admiration common to the simple-minded race of husbands.

'Jumbo,' he said, 'you're right. I was crazy. Watch me from now on. Mental suggestion is the dope. The power of the chance remark!'

The next evening at dinner, while Belinda was passing the soup, Mr. Blackwell fired his first gun. 'It seems almost too warm for hot soup,' he said. 'All the men at the office were talking about the unseasonable hot weather. I think we'd better have a window open.' To Mrs. Blackwell's dismay, he raised one of the dining-room windows, admitting a pungent frostiness of October evening. But she was game, and presently called for a palm-leaf fan. When Belinda was in the room they talked pointedly of the heat, and Mr. Blackwell quoted imaginary Weather Bureau notes from the evening paper.

After dinner, as he was about to light the log fire, from force of habit, Mrs. Blackwell snatched the burning match from him just as he was setting it to the kindling. They grinned at each other wistfully, for the ruddy evening blaze was their chief delight. Mr. Blackwell manfully took off his coat and waistcoat and sat in his shirt-sleeves until Belinda had gone to bed. Then he grew reckless and lit a roaring fire, by which they huddled in glee. He rebuilt the fire before retiring, so that Belinda might suspect nothing in the morning.

The next evening Mr. Blackwell appeared at dinner in a Palm Beach suit. Mrs. Blackwell countered by ordering iced tea. They both sneezed vigorously during the meal. 'It was so warm in town to-day, I think I caught a cold,' said Mr. Blackwell.

Later Mrs. Blackwell found Belinda examining the thermometer with a puzzled air. That night they took it down and hid it in the attic. But the great stroke of the day was revealed when Mrs. Blackwell explained that Mr. and Mrs. Chester, next door, had promised to carry on a similar psychological campaign. Belinda and Mrs. Chester's cook, Tulip – jocularly known as the Black Tulip – were friends, and would undoubtedly compare notes. Mrs. Chester had agreed not to start her furnace without consultation with Mrs. Blackwell.

October yielded to November. By good fortune the weather remained sunny, but the nights were crisp. Belinda was given an oil-stove for her attic bedroom. Mrs. Blackwell heard no more complaints of the cold, but sometimes she and her husband could hear uneasy creakings upstairs late at night. 'I wonder if Barbados really is so warm?' she asked Bob. 'I'm sure it can't be warmer than Belinda's room. She never opens the windows, and the oil-stove has to be filled every morning.'

'Perhaps some day we can get an Eskimo maid,' suggested Mr. Blackwell drowsily. He wore his Palm Beach suit every night for dinner, but underneath it he was panoplied in heavy flannels.

Through Mr. Chester the rumour of the Blackwells' experiment in psychology spread far among suburban husbands. On the morning train less fortunate commuters, who had already started their fires, referred to him as 'the little brother of the iceberg.' Mr. and Mrs. Chester came to dinner on the 16th of November. Both the men loudly clamoured for permission to remove their coats, and sat

with blanched and chattering jaws. Mr. Blackwell made a feeble pretence at mopping his brow, but when the dessert proved to be ice-cream his nerve forsook him. 'N-no, Belinda,' he said. 'It's too warm for ice-cream to-night. I don't w-want to get chilled. Bring me some hot coffee.' As she brought his cup he noticed that her honest brown brow was beaded with perspiration. 'By George,' he thought, 'this mental suggestion business certainly works.' Late that evening he lit the log fire and revelled by the blaze in an ulster.

The next evening when Mr. Blackwell came home from business he met the doctor in the hall.

'Hello, doc,' he said, 'what's up?'

'Mrs. Blackwell called me in to see your maid,' said the doctor. 'It's the queerest thing I've met in twenty years' practice. Here it is the 17th of November, and cold enough for snow. That girl has all the symptoms of sunstroke and prickly heat.'

ON MAKING FRIENDS

CONSIDERING that most friendships are made by mere hazard, how is it that men find themselves equipped and fortified with just the friends they need? We have heard of men who asserted that they would like to have more money, or more books, or more pairs of pyjamas; but we have never heard of a man saying that he did not have enough friends. For, while one can never have too many friends, yet those one has are always enough: They satisfy us completely. One has never met a man who would say, 'I wish I had a friend who would combine the good humour of A, the mystical enthusiasm of B, the love of doughnuts which is such an endearing quality in C, and who would also have the habit of giving Sunday evening suppers like D, and the well-stocked cellar which is so deplorably lacking in E.' No; the curious thing is that at any time and in any settled way of life a man is generally provided with friends far in excess of his desert, and also in excess of his capacity to absorb their wisdom and affectionate attentions.

There is some pleasant secret behind this, a secret that none is wise enough to fathom. The infinite fund of disinterested humane kindliness that is adrift in the world is part of the riddle, the insoluble riddle of life that is born in our blood and tissue. It is agreeable to think that no man, save by his own gross fault, ever went through life unfriended, without companions to whom he could stammer his momentary impulses of sagacity, to whom he could turn in hours of loneliness. It is not even necessary to know a man to be his friend. One can sit at a lunch counter,

observing the moods and whims of the white-coated pie-passer, and by the time you have juggled a couple of fried eggs you will have caught some grasp of his philosophy of life, seen the quick edge and tang of his humour, memorized the shrewdness of his worldly insight, and been as truly stimulated as if you had spent an evening with your favourite parson.

If there were no such thing as friendship existing to-day, it would perhaps be difficult to understand what it is like from those who have written about it. We have tried, from time to time, to read Emerson's enigmatic and rather frigid essay. It seems that Emerson must have put his cronies to a severe test before admitting them to the high-vaulted and rather draughty halls of his intellect. There are fine passages in his essay, but it is intellectualized, bloodless, heedless of the trifling oddities of human intercourse that make friendship so satisfying. He seems to insist upon a sterile ceremony of mutual self-improvement, a kind of religious ritual, a profound interchange of doctrines between soul and soul. His friends (one gathers) are to be antiseptic ated, all the poisons and pestilence of their faulty humours are to be drained away before they may approach the white and icy operating table of his heart. 'Why insist,' he says, 'on rash personal relations with your friend? Why go to his house, or know his wife and family?' And yet does not the botanist like to study the flower in the soil where it grows?

Polonius, too, is another ancient supposed to be an authority on friendship. The Polonius family must have been a thoroughly dreary one to live with; we have often thought that poor Ophelia would have gone mad anyway, even if

there had been no Hamlet. Laertes preaches to Ophelia; Polonius preaches to Laertes. Laertes escaped by going abroad, but the girl had to stay at home. Hamlet saw that pithy old Polonius was a preposterous and orotund ass. Polonius's doctrine of friendship – 'The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel' – was, we trow, a necessary one in his case. It would need a hoop of steel to keep them near such a dismal old sawmonger.

Friendships, we think, do not grow up in any such carefully tended and contemplated fashion as Messrs. Emerson and Polonius suggest. They begin haphazard. As we look back on the first time we saw our friends we find that generally our original impression was curiously astray. We have worked along beside them, have consorted with them drunk or sober, have grown to cherish their delicious absurdities, have outrageously imposed on each other's patience – and suddenly we awoke to realize what had happened. We had, without knowing it, gained a new friend. In some curious way the unseen border line had been passed. We had reached the final culmination of Anglo-Saxon regard when two men rarely look each other straight in the eyes because they are ashamed to show each other how fond they are. We had reached the fine flower and the ultimate test of comradeship – that is, when you get a letter from one of your 'best friends,' you know you don't need to answer it until you get ready.

Emerson is right in saying that friendship can't be hurried. It takes time to ripen. It needs a background of humorous, wearisome, or even tragic events shared together, a certain tract of memories in common, so that you know that your

own life and your companion's have really moved for some time in the same channel. It needs interchange of books, meals together, discussion of one another's whims with mutual friends, to gain a proper perspective. It is set in a rich haze of half-remembered occasions, sudden glimpses, ludicrous pranks, unsuspected observations, midnight confidences when heart spoke to candid heart.

The soul preaches humility to itself when it realizes, startled, that it has won a new friend. Knowing what a posset of contradictions we all are, it feels a symptom of shame at the thought that our friend knows all our frailties and yet thinks us worth affection. We all have cause to be shamefaced indeed; for whereas we love ourselves in spite of our faults, our friends often love us even on account of our faults, the highest level to which attachment can go. And what an infinite appeal there is in their faces! How we grow to cherish those curious little fleshy cages – so oddly sculptured – which enclose the spirit within. To see those faces, bent unconsciously over their tasks – each different, each unique, each so richly and queerly expressive of the lively and perverse enigma of man, is a full education in human tolerance. Privately, one studies his own ill-modelled visnomy to see if by any chance it bespeaks the emotions he inwardly feels. We know – as Hamlet did – the vicious mole of nature in us, the o'ergrowth of some complexion that mars the purity of our secret resolutions. Yet – our friends have passed it over, have shown their willingness to take us as we are. Can we do less than hope to deserve their generous tenderness, granted before it was earned?

The problem of education, said R. L. S., is twofold –

'first to know, then to utter.' Every man knows what friendship means, but few can utter that complete frankness of communion, based upon full comprehension of mutual weakness, enlivened by a happy understanding of honourable intentions generously shared. When we first met our friends we met with bandaged eyes. We did not know what journeys they had been on, what winding roads their spirits had travelled, what ingenious shifts they had devised to circumvent the walls and barriers of the world. We know these now, for some of them they have told us; others we have guessed. We have watched them when they little dreamed it; just as they (we suppose) have done with us. Every gesture and method of their daily movement have become part of our enjoyment of life. Not until a time comes for saying good-bye will we ever know how much we would like to have said. At those times one has to fall back on shrewder tongues. You remember Hilaire Belloc:

> From quiet homes and first beginning
> Out to the undiscovered ends,
> There's nothing worth the wear of winning
> But laughter, and the love of friends.

THE TRAGEDY OF WASHINGTON SQUARE

ONE of our favourite amusements at lunch-time is to walk down to Henry Rosa's pastry shop, and buy a slab of cinnamon bun. Then we walk round Washington Square, musing, and gradually walking round and engulfing the cinnamon bun at the same time. It is surprising what a large circumference those buns of Henry's have. By the time we have gnashed our way through one of those warm and mystic phenomena we don't want to eat again for a month.

The real reason for the cinnamon bun is to fortify us for the contemplation and onslaught upon a tragic problem that Washington Square presents to our pondering soul.

Washington Square[1] is a delightful place. There are trees there, and publishing houses and warm green grass and a fire-engine station. There are children playing about on the broad pavements that criss-cross the sward; there is a fine roof of blue sky, kept from falling down by the enormous building at the north side of the Square. But these things present no problems. To our simple philosophy a tree is a vegetable, a child is an animal, a building is a mineral, and this classification needs no further scrutiny or analysis. But there is one thing in Washington Square that embodies an intellectual problem, a grappling of the soul, a matter for continual anguish and decision.

On the west side of the Square is the Swiss consulate, and it is this that weighs upon our brooding spirit. How many times we have paused before that quiet house and gazed upon the little red cross, a Maltese Cross, or a Cross

[1] Philadelphia.

of St. Hieronymus, or whatever the heraldic term is, that represents and symbolizes the diplomatic and spiritual presence of the Swiss republic. We have stood there and thought about William Tell and the Berne Convention and the St. Gothard Tunnel and St. Bernard dogs and winter sports and alpenstocks and edelweiss and the Jungfrau and all the other trappings and trappists that make Switzerland notable. We have mused upon the Swiss military system, which is so perfect that it has never had to be tested by war; and we have wondered what is the name of the President of Switzerland and how he keeps it out of the papers so successfully. One day we lugged an encyclopædia and the Statesman's Year Book out to the Square with us and sat down on a bench facing the consulate and read up about the Swiss Cabinet and the national bank of Switzerland and her child-labour problems. Accidentally we discovered the name of the Swiss President, but as he has kept it so dark we are not going to give away his secret.

Our dilemma is quite simple. Where there is a consulate there must be a consul, and it seems to us a dreadful thing that inside that building there lurks a Swiss envoy who does not know that we, here, we who are walking round the Square with our mouthful of Henry Rosa's bun, once spent a night in Switzerland. We want him to know that; we think he ought to know it; we think it is part of his diplomatic duty to know it. And yet how can we burst in on him and tell him that apparently irrelevant piece of information?

We have thought of various ways of breaking it to him, or should we say breaking him to it?

Should we rush in and say the Swiss national debt is

$ –, or – kopecks, and then lead on to other topics such as the comparative heights of mountain peaks, letting the consul gradually grasp the fact that we have been in Switzerland? Or should we call him up on the telephone and make a mysterious appointment with him, when we could blurt it out brutally?

We are a modest and diffident man, and this little problem, which would be so trifling to many, presents inscrutable hardships to us.

Another aspect of the matter is this. We think the consul ought to know that we spent one night in Switzerland once; we think he ought to know what we were doing that night; but we also think he ought to know just why it was that we spent only one night in his beautiful country. We don't want him to think we hurried away because we were annoyed by anything, or because the national debt was so many rupees or piastres, or because child labour in Switzerland is –. It is the thought that the consul and all his staff are in total ignorance of our existence that galls us. Here we are, walking round and round the Square, bursting with information and enthusiasm about Swiss republicanism, and the consul never heard of us. How can we summon up courage enough to tell him the truth? That is the tragedy of Washington Square.

It was a dark, rainy night when we bicycled into Basel. We had been riding all day long, coming down from the dark clefts of the Black Forest, and we and our knapsack were wet through. We had been bicycling for six weeks with no more luggage than a rucksack could hold. We never saw such rain as fell that day we slithered and sloshed

on the rugged slopes that tumble down to the Rhine at Basel. (The annual rainfall in Switzerland is – .) When we got to the little hotel at Basel we sat in the dining-room with water running off us in trickles, until the head waiter glared. And so all we saw of Switzerland was the interior of the tobacconists, where we tried, unsuccessfully, to get some English baccy. Then we went to bed while our garments were dried. We stayed in bed for ten hours, reading fairy-tales and smoking and answering modestly through the transom when anyone asked us questions.

The next morning we overhauled our wardrobe. We will not particularize, but we decided that one change of duds, after six weeks' bicycling, was not enough of a wardrobe to face the Jungfrau and the national debt and the child-labour problem, not to speak of the anonymous President and the other sights that matter (such as the Matterhorn). Also, our stock of tobacco had run out, and German or French tobacco we simply cannot smoke. Even if we could get along on substitute fumigants the issue of garments was imperative. The nearest place where we could get any clothes of the kind that we are accustomed to, the kind of clothes that are familiarly symbolized by three well-known initials, was London. And the only way we had to get to London was on our bicycle. We thought we had better get busy. It's a long bike ride from Basel to London. So we just went as far as the Basel Cathedral, so as not to seem too unappreciative of all the treasures that Switzerland had been saving for us for countless centuries; then we got on board our patient steed and trundled off through Alsace.

That was in August, 1912, and we firmly intended to go

back to Switzerland the next year to have another look at the rainfall and the rest of the statistics and *status quos.* But the opportunity has not come.

So that is why we wander disconsolately about Washington Square, trying to make up our mind to unburden our bosom to the Swiss consul and tell him the worst. But how can one go and interrupt a consul to tell him that sort of thing? Perhaps he wouldn't understand it at all; he would misunderstand our pathetic little story and be angry that we took up his time. He wouldn't think that a shortage of tobacco and small clothes was a sufficient excuse for slighting William Tell and the Jungfrau. He wouldn't appreciate the frustrated emotion and longing with which we watch the little red cross at his front door, and think of all it means to us and all it might have meant.

We took another turn around Washington Square, trying to embolden ourself enough to go in and tell the consul all this. And then our heart failed us. We decided to write a piece for the paper about it, and if the consul ever sees it he will be generous and understand. He will know why, behind the humble façade of his consulate on Washington Square, we see the heaven-piercing summits of Switzerland rising like a dream, blue and silvery and tantalizing.

P.S. Since the above we have definitely decided not to go to call on the Swiss consul. Suppose he were only a vice-consul, a Philadelphia Swiss, who had never been to Switzerland in his life.

17 HERIOT ROW

THERE is a small black notebook into which I look once or twice a year to refresh my memory of a carnal and spiritual pilgrimage to Edinburgh, made with Mifflin McGill (upon whose head be peace) in the summer of 1911. It is a testament of light-hearted youth, savoury with the unindentured joys of twenty-one and the grand literary passion. Would that one might again steer *Shot-over* (dearest of pushbikes) along the Banbury Road, and see Mifflin's lean shanks twirl up the dust on the way to Stratford! Never was more innocent merriment spread upon English landscape. When I die, bury the black note-book with me.

That notebook is memorable also in a statistical way, and perchance may serve future historians as a document proving the moderate cost of wayfaring in those halcyon days. Nothing in Mr. Pepys's diary is more interesting than his meticulous record of what his amusements cost him. Mayhap some future economist will pore upon these guileless confessions. For in the black memorandum book I succeeded, for almost the only time in my life, in keeping an accurate record of the lapse of coin during nine whole days. I shall deposit the document with the Congressional Library in Washington for future annalists; in the mean-time I make no excuse for recounting the items of the first sixty hours. Let no one take amiss the frequent entries marked 'cider.' July, 1911, was a hot month and a dusty, and we were biking fifty miles the day. Please reckon exchange at two cents per penny.

		£ s. d.
July 16	pint cider	4
	½ pint cider	1½
	lunch at Banbury	2 2
	pint cider at Ettington	3
	supper at Stratford	1 3
	stamp and postcard	2
		4 3½
July 17	Post-cards and stamps	9
	pencil	1
	Warwick Castle	2 –
	cider at the *Bear and Baculus* (which Mifflin *would* call the *Bear and Bacillus*)	2½
	Bowling Green Inn, bed and breakfast	3 2
	Puncture	1 –
	Lunch, Kenilworth	1 6
	Kenilworth Castle	6
	Post-cards	4
	Lemonade, Coventry	4
	Cider	2½
	Supper, Tamworth, *The Castle Hotel*	2 1
		16 5½

		£	s.	d.
	Brought forward	16	5	½
July 18	Johnson House, Lichfield		3	
	cider at *The Three Crowns*		4	
	post-card and shave		4	
	The King's Head, bed and breakfast		3	7
	cider		2	
	tip on road[1]			1½
	lunch, Uttoxeter		1	3
	cider, Ashbourne, *The Green Man*		3	
	landlord's drink, Ashbourne[2]		1	
	supper, *Newhaven House*		1	–
	lemonade, Buxton		3	
	TOTAL	£1–4–1		
		($5.78)		

[1]As far as I can remember, this was a gratuity to a rather tarnished subject who directed us at a fork in the road, near a railway crossing.

[2]This was a copper well lavished; for the publican, a ventripotent person with a liquid and glamorous brown eye, told us excellent gossip about Dr. Johnson and George Eliot, both heroes in that neighbourhood. 'Yes,' we said, 'that man Eliot was a great writer,' and he agreed.

That is to say, 24 bob for two and a half days. We used to reckon that ten shillings a day would do us very nicely, barring luxuries and emergencies. We attained

a zealous proficiency in reckoning shillings and pence, and our fervour in posting our ledgers would have gladdened a firm of auditors. I remember lying on the coping of a stone bridge over the water of Teviot near Hawick, admiring the green-brown tint of the swift stream bickering over the stones. Mifflin was writing busily in his notebook on the other side of the bridge. I thought to myself, 'Bless the lad, he's jotting down some picturesque notes of something that has struck his romantic eye.' And just then he spoke – 'Four and eleven pence half-penny so far to-day!'

Would I could retrogress over the devious and enchanting itinerary. The McGill route from Oxford to Auld Reekie is 417 miles; it was the afternoon of the ninth day when with thumping hearts we saw Arthur's Seat from a dozen miles away. Our goal was in sight!

There was a reason for all this pedalling madness. Ever since the days when we had wandered by Darby Creek, reading R. L. S. aloud to one another, we had planned this trip to the grey metropolis of the north. A score of sacred names had beckoned us, the haunts of the master. We knew them better than any other syllables in the world. Heriot Row, Princes Street, the Calton Hill, Duddingston Loch, Antigua Street, the Water of Leith, Colinton, Swanston, the Pentland Hills – O my friends, do those names mean to you what they did to us? Then you are one of the brotherhood – what was to us then the sweetest brotherhood in the world.

In a quiet little hotel in Rutland Square we found decent lodging, in a large chamber which was really the smoking-room of the house. The city was crowded

with tourists on account of an expected visit of the King and Queen; every other room in the hotel was occupied. Greatly to our satisfaction we were known as 'the smoking-room gentlemen' throughout our stay. Our windows opened upon ranks of corridor-cars lying on the Caledonian Railway-sidings, and the clink and jar of buffers and coupling irons were heard all night long. I seem to remember that somewhere in his letters R. L. S. speaks of that same sound. He knew Rutland Square well, for his boyhood friend Charles Baxter lived there. Writing from Samoa in later years he says that one memory stands out above all others of his youth – Rutland Square. And while that was of course only the imaginative fervour of the moment, yet we were glad to know that in that quiet little cul-de-sac behind the railway terminal we were on ground well loved by Tusitala.

The first evening, and almost every twilight while we were in Auld Reekie, we found our way to 17 Heriot Row – famous address, which had long been as familiar to us as our own. I think we expected to find a tablet on the house commemorating the beloved occupant; but no; to our surprise it was dark, dusty, and tenantless. A sign TO SELL was prominent. To take the name of the agent was easy. A great thought struck us. Could we not go over the house in the character of prospective purchasers? Mifflin and I went back to our smoking-room and concocted a genteel letter to Messrs. Guild and Shepherd, Writers to the Signet.

Promptly came a reply (Scots business men answer at once).

16 CHARLOTTE SQUARE
EDINBURGH
26th July, 1911

DEAR SIR,

17 HERIOT ROW

We have received your letter regarding this house. The house can be seen at any time, and if you will let us know when you wish to view it we shall arrange to have it opened. We are,

Yours faithfully,
GUILD AND SHEPHERD.

Our hearts were uplifted, but now we were mightily embarrassed as to the figure we would cut before the Writers to the Signet. You must remember that we were two young vagabonds in the earliest twenties, travelling with slim knapsacks, and much soiled by a fortnight on the road. I was in knickerbockers and khaki shirt; Mifflin in greasy grey flannels and sub-fusc Norfolk. Our only claims to gentility were our monocles. Always take a monocle on a vagabond tour: it is a never-failing source of amusement and passport of gentility. No matter how ragged you are, if you can screw a pane in your eye you can awe the yokel or the tradesman.

The private records of the firm of Guild and Shepherd doubtless show that on Friday, July 28, 1911, one of their polite attachés, appearing as per appointment at 17 Heriot Row, was met by two eccentric young gentlemen, clad in dirty white flannel hats, waterproof capes, each with an impressive monocle. Let it be said

to the honour of the attaché in question that he showed no symptoms of surprise or alarm. We explained, I think, that we were scouting for my father, who (it was alleged) greatly desired to settle down in Edinburgh. And we had presence of mind enough to inquire about plumbing, stationary wash-tubs, and the condition of the flues. I wish I could remember what rent was quoted.

He showed us all through the house; and you may imagine that we stepped softly and with beating hearts. Here we were on the very track of the Magician himself: his spirit whispered in the lonely rooms. We imagined R. L. S. as a little child, peering from the windows at dusk to see Leerie light the street-lamps outside – a quaint, thin, elfish face with shining brown eyes; or held up in illness by Cummie to see the gracious dawn heralded by oblongs of lights in the windows across the Queen Street gardens. We saw the college lad, tall, with tweed coat and cigarette, returning to Heriot Row with an armful of books, in sad or sparkling mood. The house was dim and dusty: a fine entrance hall, large dining-room facing the street – and we imagined Louis and his parents at breakfast. Above this, the drawing-room, floored with parquet oak, a spacious and attractive chamber. Above this again, the nursery, and opening off it the little room where faithful Cummie slept. But in vain we looked for some sign or souvenir of the entrancing spirit. The room that echoed to his childish glee, that heard his smothered sobs in the endless nights of childish pain, the room where he scribbled and brooded and burst into gusts of youth's passionate outcry, is now silent and forlorn.

With what subtly mingled feelings we peered from room to room, seeing everything, and yet not daring to give ourselves away to the courteous young agent. And what was it he said? – 'This was the house of Lord So-and-so' (I forget the name) – 'and incidentally, Robert Louis Stevenson lived here once. His signature occurs once or twice in the deeds.'

Incidentally! . . .

Like many houses in Auld Reekie, 17 Heriot Row is built on a steep slant of ground, so that the rear of the house is a story or more higher than the face. We explored the kitchens, laundries, store-rooms, and other 'offices' with care, imagining that little 'Smoutie' may have run here and there in search of tit-bits from the cook. Visions of that childhood, fifty years before, were almost as real as our own. We seemed to hear the young treble of his voice. That house was the home of the Stevensons for thirty years (1857–1887) – surely even the thirty years that have gone by since Thomas Stevenson died cannot have laid all those dear ghosts we conjured up!

We thanked our guide and took leave of him. If the firm of Guild and Shepherd should ever see this, surely they will forgive our innocent deception, for the honour of R. L. S. I wonder if anyone has yet put a tablet on the house? If not, Mifflin and I will do so, some day.

In the evenings we used to wander up to Heriot Row in the long northern dusk, to sit on the front steps of No. 17 waiting for Leerie to come and light the famous lamp which still stands on the pavement in front of the dining-room windows:

For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door,
And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many more;
And O! before you hurry by with ladder and with light,
O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him to-night!

But no longer does Leerie 'with lantern and with ladder come posting up the street.' Nowadays he carries a long pole bearing a flame cunningly sheltered in a brass socket. But the Leerie of 1911 ('Leerie-light-the-lamps' is a generic nickname for all lamplighters in Scotland) was a pleasant fellow even if ladderless, and we used to have a cigar ready for him when he reached 17. We told him of R. L. S., of whom he had vaguely heard, and explained the sanctity of that particular lamp. He in turn talked freely of his craft, and learning that we were Americans he told us of his two sisters 'in Pennsylvania, at 21 Thorn Street.' He seemed to think Pennsylvania a town, but finally we learned that the Misses Leerie lived in Sewickley, where they were doing well, and sending back money to the 'kiddies.' Good Leerie, I wonder do you still light the lamps on Heriot Row, or have you seen redder beacons on Flander fields?

One evening I remember we fell into discussion whether the lamp-post was still the same one that R. L. S. had known. We were down on hands and knees on the pavement, examining the base of the pillar by match-light in search of possible dates. A very seedy and disreputable-looking man passed, evidently regarding us with apprehension as detectives. Mifflin, never at a loss, remarked loudly, 'No, I see no foot-prints here,' and as the ragged one passed hastily on with head twisted over his shoulder,

we followed him. At the corner of Howe Street he broke into an uneasy shuffle, and Mifflin turned a great laugh into a Scotland Yard sneeze.

Howe Street crosses Heriot Row at right angles, only a few paces from No. 17. It dips sharply downhill toward the Water of Leith, and Mifflin and I used to stand at the corner and wonder just where took place the adventure with the lame boy which R. L. S. once described when setting down some recollections of childhood.

'In Howe Street, round the corner from our house, I often saw a lame boy of rather a rough and poor appearance. He had one leg much shorter than the other, and wallowed in his walk, in consequence, like a ship in a seaway. I had read more than enough, in tracts and goody story-books, of the isolation of the infirm; and after many days of bashfulness and hours of consideration, I finally accosted him, sheepishly enough, I dare say, in these words: "Would you like to play with me?" I remember the expression, which sounds exactly like a speech from one of the goody books that had nerved me to the venture. But the answer was not the one I had anticipated, for it was a blast of oaths. I need not say how fast I fled. This incident was the more to my credit, as I had, when I was young, a desperate aversion to addressing strangers, though when once we had got into talk I was pretty certain to assume the lead. The last particular may still be recognized. About four years ago I saw my lame lad, and knew him again at once. He was then a man of great strength, rolling along, with an inch of cutty in his mouth

and a butcher's basket on his arm. Our meeting had been nothing to him, but it was a great affair to me.'

We strolled up the esplanade below the Castle, pausing in Ramsay's Gardens to admire the lighted city from above. In the valley between the Castle and Princes Street the pale blue mist rises at night like an exhalation from the old grey stones. The lamps shining through it blend in a delicate opalescent sheen, shot here and there with brighter flares. As the sky darkens the castle looms in silhouette, with one yellow square below the Half Moon Battery. 'There are no stars like the Edinburgh street lamps,' says R. L. S. Aye, and the brightest of them all shines on Heriot Row.

SAFETY-PINS

LIGATURE of infancy, healing engine of emergency, base and mainstay of our civilization – we celebrate the safety-pin.

What would we do without safety-pins? Is it not odd to think, looking about us on our fellow-men (bearded realtors, ejaculating poets, plump and ruddy policemen, even the cheerful dusky creature who runs the elevator and whistles 'Oh, what a Pal was Mary' as the clock draws near 6 p.m.) – all these were first housed and swaddled and made seemly with a paper of safety-pins. How is it that the inventor who first conferred this great gift on the world is not known by name for the admiration and applause of posterity? Was it not the safety-pin that made the world safe for infancy?

There will be some, mayhap, to set up the button as rival to the safety-pin in service to humanity. But our homage bends toward the former. Not only was it our shield and buckler when we were too puny and impish to help ourselves, but it is also (now we are parent) symbol of many a hard-fought field, where we have campaigned all over the white counterpane of a large bed to establish an urchin in his proper gear, while he kicked and scrambled, witless of our dismay. It is fortunate, pardee, that human memory does not extend backward to the safety-pin era – happily the recording carbon sheet of the mind is not inserted on the roller of experience until after the singular humiliations of earliest childhood have passed. Otherwise our first recollection would doubtless be of the grimly flushed large face of a

resolute parent, bending hotly downward in effort to make both ends meet while we wambled and waggled in innocent, maddening sport. In those days when life was (as George Herbert puts it) 'assorted sorrows, anguish of all sizes,' the safety-pin was the only thing that raised us above the bandar-log. No wonder the antique schoolmen used to enjoy computing the number of angels that might dance on the point of a pin. But only archangels would be worthy to pirouette on a safety-pin, which is indeed mightier than the sword. When Adam delved and Eve did spin, what did they do for a safety-pin?

Great is the stride when an infant passes from the safety-pin period to the age of buttons. There are three ages of human beings in this matter: (1) Safety-pins, (2) Buttons, (3) Studs, or (for females) Hooks and Eyes. Now there is an interim in the life of man when he passes away from safety-pins, and, for a season, knows them not – save as mere convenience in case of breakdown. He thinks of them, in his antic bachelor years, as merely the wrecking train of the sartorial system, a casual conjunction for pyjamas, or an impromptu hoist for small-clothes. Ah! with humility and gratitude he greets them again later, seeing them at their true worth, the symbol of integration for the whole social fabric. Women, with their intuitive wisdom, are more subtle in this subject. They never wholly outgrow safety-pins, and though they love to ornament them with jewellery, precious metal, and enamels, they are naught but safety-pins after all. Some ingenious philosopher could write a full tractate on woman in her relation to pins – hairpins, clothes-pins, hatpins, rolling-pins.

Only a bachelor, as we have implied, scoffs at pins. Hamlet remarked, after seeing the ghost, and not having any Sir Oliver Lodge handy to reassure him, that he did not value his life at a pin's fee. Pope, we believe, coined the contemptuous phrase, 'I care not a pin.' The pin has never been done justice in the world of poetry. As one might say, the pin has had no Pindar. Of course there is the old saw about see a pin and pick it up, all the day you'll have good luck. This couplet, barbarous as it is in its false rhyme, points (as Mother Goose generally does) to a profound truth. When you see a pin, you must pick it up. In other words, it is on the floor, where pins generally are. Their instinctive affinity for terra firma makes one wonder why they, rather than the apple, did not suggest the law of gravitation to some one long before Newton.

Incidentally, of course, the reason why Adam and Eve were forbidden to pick the apple was that it was supposed to stay on the tree until it fell, and Adam would then have had the credit of spotting the principle of gravitation.

Much more might be said about pins, touching upon their curious capacity for disappearing, superstitions concerning them, usefulness of hatpins or hairpins as pipe-cleaners, usefulness of pins to schoolboys, both when bent for fishing and when filed to an extra point for use on the boy in the seat in front (honouring him in the breech, as Hamlet would have said) and their curious habits of turning up in unexpected places, undoubtedly caught by pins in their long association with the lovelier sex. But of these useful hyphens of raiment we will merely conclude by saying that those interested in the

pin industry will probably emigrate to England, for we learn from the *Encyclopædia Britannica* that in that happy island pins are cleaned by being boiled in weak beer. Let it not be forgotten, however, that of all kinds, the safety is the King Pin.

TADPOLES

NEAR our house, out in the sylvan Salamis Estates, there is a pond. We fear we cannot describe this pond to you in a way to carry conviction. You will think we exaggerate if we tell you, with honest warmth, how fair the prospect is. Therefore, in sketching the scene, we will be austere, churlish, a miser of adjectives. We will tell you naught of sun-sparkle by day where the green and gold of April linger in that small hollow landskip, where the light shines red through the faint bronze veins of young leaves – much as it shines red through the finger joinings of a child's hand held toward the sun. We will tell you naught of frog-song by night, of those reduplicated whistlings and peepings. We will tell you naught of . . . No, we will be austere.

On one side this pond reflects the white cloudy bravery of fruit trees in flower, veterans of an orchard surviving an old farm-house that stood on the hill-top long ago. It burned, we believe: only a rectangle of low stone walls remains. Opposite, the hollow is overlooked by a bumpy hillock fringed with those excellent dark evergreen trees – shall we call them hemlocks? – whose flat fronds silhouette against the sky and contribute a feeling of mystery and wilderness. On this little hill are several japonica trees, in violent ruddy blossom; and clumps of tiger-lily blades springing up; and bloodroots. The region prickles thickly with blackberry brambles, and mats of honeysuckle. Across the pond, looking from the water-side meadow where the first violets are, your gaze skips (like a flat stone deftly flung) from the level amber (dim-

pled with silver) of the water, through a convenient dip of country where the fields are folded down below the level of the pool. So the eye, skittering across the water, leaps promptly and cleanly to blue ranges by the Sound, a couple of miles away. All this, mere introduction to the real theme, which is Tadpoles.

We intended to write a poem about those tadpoles, but Endymion tells us that Louis Untermeyer has already smitten a lute on that topic. We are queasy of trailing such an able poet. Therefore we celebrate these tadpoles in prose. They deserve a prose as lucid, as limpid, as cool and embracing, as the water of their home.

Coming back to tadpoles, the friends of our youth, shows us that we have completed a biological cycle of much import. Back to tadpoles in one generation, as the adage might have said. Twenty-five years ago we ourself were making our first acquaintance with these friendly creatures, in the immortal (for us) waters of Cobb's Creek, Pennsylvania. (Who was Cobb, we wonder?) And now our urchins, with furious glee, applaud their sire who wades the still frosty quags of our pond, on Sunday mornings, to renew their supply of tads. It is considered fair and decent that each batch of tadpoles should live in their prison (a milk bottle) only one week. The following Sunday they go back to the pond, and a new generation take their places. There is some subtle kinship, we think, between children and tadpoles. No childhood is complete until it has watched their gloomy and impassive faces munching against the glass, and see the gradual egress (as the encyclopædia

pedantically puts it) of their tender limbs, the growing froggishness of their demeanour.

Some time when you are exploring in the *Britannica*, by the way, after you have read about Tactics and William Howard Taft, turn to the article on Tadpoles and see if you can recognize them as described by the learned G. A. B. An amusing game, we submit, would be to take a number of encyclopædia descriptions of familiar things, and see how many of our friends could identify them under their scientific nomenclature.

But it is very pleasant to dally about the pond on a mild April morning. While the Urchiness mutters among the violets, picking blue fistfuls of stalkless heads, the Urchin, on a plank at the waterside, studies these weedy shallows which are lively with all manner of mysterious excitement, and probes a waterlogged stump in hope to recapture Brer Tarrypin, who once was ours for a short while. Gissing (the juvenile and too enthusiastic dog) has to be kept away from the pond by repeated sticks thrown as far as possible in another direction; otherwise he insists on joining the tadpole search, and, poking his snout under water, attempts to bark at the same time, with much coughing and smother.

The tadpoles, once caught, are taken home in a small yellow pail. They seem quite cheerful. They are kept, of course, in their native fluid, which is liberally thickened with the oozy emulsion of moss, mud, and busy animalculæ that were dredged up with them in clutches along the bottom of the pond. They lie, thoughtful, at the bottom of their milk bottle, occasionally flourishing furiously round their prison. But, since reading

that article in the *Britannica*, we are more tender toward them. For the learned G. A. B. says: 'A glandular streak extending from the nostril toward the eye is the lachrymal canal.' Is it possible that tadpoles weep? We will look at them again when we go home to-night. We are, in the main, a kind-hearted host. If they show any signs of effusion . . .

INGO

'ZUM ANDENKEN'

THE first night we sat down at the inn table for supper I lost my heart to Ingo.

Ingo was just ten years old. He wore a little sailor suit of blue and white striped linen; his short trousers showed chubby brown calves above his white socks; his round golden head cropped close in the German fashion. His blue eyes were grave and thoughtful. By great good fortune we sat next each other at table, and in my rather grotesque German I began a conversation. How careful Ingo was not to laugh at the absurdities of my syntax! How very courteous he was!

Looking back into the mysterious panorama of pictures that we call memory, I can see the long dining-room of the old gasthaus in the Black Forest, where two Americans on bicycles appeared out of nowhere and asked for lodging. They were the first Americans who had ever been seen in that remote valley, and the Gasthaus zur Krone (the 'Crown Inn') found them very amusing. Perhaps you have never seen a country tavern in the Schwarzwald? Then you have something to live for. A long, low building with a moss-grown roof and tremendous broad eaves sheltering little galleries; and the barn under the same roof for greater warmth in winter. One side of the house was always strong with an excellent homely aroma of cow and horse; one had only to open a door in the upper hall, a door that looked just like a bedroom entrance, to find oneself in the haymow. There I used to lie for hours, reading and

listening to the summer rain thudding on the shingles. Sitting in the little gallery under the eaves, looking happily down the white road where the yellow coach brought the mail twice a day, one could see the long vista of the valley, the women with bright red jackets working in the fields, and the dark masses of forest on the hillside opposite. There was much rain that summer; the mountains were often veiled all day long in misty shreds of cloud, and the two Americans sat with pipes and books at the long dining-table, greeted by gales of laughter on the part of the robust landlord's niece when they essayed the native idiom. '*Sie arbeiten immer!*' she used to say; '*Sie werden krank!*' ('You're always working; you'll be ill!')

There is a particular poignance in looking back now on those happy days two years before the War. Nowhere in all the world, I suppose, are there more cordial, warm-hearted, simple, human people than the South Germans. On the front of the inn there was a big yellow metal sign, giving the military number of the district, and the mobilization points for the Landsturm and the Landwehr, and we realized that even here the careful organization of the military power had numbered and ticketed every village. But what did it mean to us? War was a thing unthinkable in those days. We bicycled everywhere, climbed mountains, bathed in waterfalls, chatted fluent and unorthodox German with every one we met, and played games with Ingo.

Dear little Ingo! At the age when so many small boys are pert, impudent, self-conscious, he was the simplest, happiest, gravest little creature. His hobby was astronomy, and often I would find him sitting quietly in a corner with

a book about the stars. On clear evenings we would walk along the road together, in the mountain hush that was only broken by the brook tumbling down the valley, and he would name the constellations for me. His little round head was thrilled through and through by the immense mysteries of space; sometimes at meal times he would fall into a muse, forgetting his beef and gravy. Once I asked him at dinner what he was thinking of. He looked up with his clear grey-blue eyes and flashing smile: '*Von den Sternen!*' ('Of the stars.')

The time after supper was reserved for games, in which Wolfgang, Ingo's smaller brother (aged seven), also took part. Our favourite pastimes were 'Irrgarten' and 'Galgenspiel,' in which we found enormous amusement. 'Galgenspiel' was Ingo's translation of 'Hangman,' a simple pastime which had sometimes entertained my own small brother on rainy days; apparently it was new in Germany. One player thinks of a word, and sets down on paper a dash for each letter in this word. It is the task of the other to guess the word, and he names the letters of the alphabet one by one. Every time he mentions a letter that is contained in the word you must set it down in its proper place in the word, but every time he mentions a letter that is not in the word you draw a portion of a person depending from a gallows; the object of course being for him to guess the word before you finish drawing the effigy. We played the game entirely in German, and I can still see Ingo's intent little face bent over my preposterous drawings, cudgelling his quick and happy brain to spot the word before the hangman could finish his grim task. 'Quick, Ingo!' I would cry. 'You will get yourself hung!' and he

would laugh in his own lovable way. There was never a jollier way of learning a foreign language than by playing games with Ingo.

The other favourite pastime was drawing mazes on paper, labyrinths of winding paths which must be traversed by a pencil point. The task was to construct a maze so complicated that the other could not find his way out, starting at the middle. We would sit down at opposite ends of the room to construct our mysteries of blind alleys and misleading passages, then each one would be turned loose in the 'irrgarten' drawn by the other. Ingo would stand at my side while I tried in obstinate stupidity to find my way through his little puzzle; his eager heart inside his sailor blouse would pound like a drum when I was nearing the dangerous places where an exit might be won. He would hold his breath so audibly, and his blue eyes would grow so anxious, that I always knew when not to make the right turning, and my pencil would wander on in hopeless despair until he had mercy on me and led me to freedom.

After lunch every day, while waiting for the mail-coach to come trundling up the valley, Ingo and I used to sit in the little balcony under the eaves, reading. He introduced me to his favourite book, *Till Eulenspiegel*, and we sped joyously through the adventures of that immortal buffoon of German folklore. We took turns reading aloud: every paragraph or so I would appeal for an explanation of something. Generally I understood well enough, but it was such a delight to hear Ingo strive to make the meaning plain. What a puckering of his bright boyish forehead, what a grave determination to elucidate the fable! What a mingling of ecstatic pride in having a grown man as

pupil, with deference due to an elder. Ingo was a born gentleman and in his fiercest transports of glee never forgot his manners. I would make some purposely ludicrous shot at the sense, and he would double up with innocent mirth. His clear laughter would ring out, and his mother, pacing a digestive stroll on the highway below us, would look up crying in the German way, '*Gott! wie er freut sich!*' The progress of our reading was held up by these interludes, but I could never resist the temptation to start Ingo explaining.

Ingo having made me free of his dearest book, it was only fair to reciprocate. So one day Lloyd and I bicycled down to Freiburg, and there, at a heavenly 'bookhandlers,' I found a copy of *Treasure Island* in German. Then there was revelry in the balcony! I read the tale aloud, and I wish R. L. S. might have seen the shining of Ingo's eyes! Alas, the vividness of the story interfered with the lad's sleep, and his mother was a good deal disturbed about this violent yarn we were reading together. How close he used to sit beside me as we read of the dark doings at the *Admiral Benbow*; and how his face would fall when, clear and hollow from the sounding-board of the hills, came the quick *clop*, *clop* of the mail-man's horses.

I don't know anything that has ever gone deeper in my memory than those hours spent with Ingo. I have a little snapshot of him I took the misty, sorrowful morning when I bicycled away to Basel and left the Gasthaus zur Krone in its mountain valley. The blessed boy stands up erect and stiff in the formal German way, and I can see his blue eyes alight with friendliness, and a little bit unhappy because his eccentric American comrade was going away and there

would be no more afternoons with *Till Eulenspiegel* on the balcony. I wonder if he thinks of me as often as I do of him? He gave me a glimpse into the innocent heaven of a child's heart that I can never forget. By now he is approaching sixteen, and I pray that whatever the War may take away from me it will spare me my Ingo. It is strange and sad to recall that his parting present to me was a drawing of a Zeppelin, upon which he toiled manfully all one afternoon. I still have it in my scrap-book.

And I wonder if he ever looks in the old copy of Hauff's *Märchen* that I bought for him in Freiburg, and sees the English words that he was to learn how to translate when he should grow older. As I remember them, they ran like this:

'For Ingo to learn English will very easy be
If some one is as kind to him as he has been to me;
Plays games with him, reads fairy tales, corrects all his mistakes,
And never laughs too loudly at the blunders that he makes –
Then he will find, as I did, how well two pleasures blend:
To learn a foreign language, and to make a foreign friend.'

If I love anybody in the world, I love Ingo. And that is why I cannot get up much enthusiasm for hymns of hate.

A VENTURE IN MYSTICISM

I HAD heard so much about this Rabbi Tagore and his message of calm for our hustling, feverish life, that I thought I would try to put some of that stuff into practice.

'Shut out the clamour of small things. Withdraw into the deep quiet of your soul, commune with infinite beauty and infinite peace. You must be full of gladness and love for every person and every tiniest thing. Great activity and worry is needless – it is poison to the soul. Learn to reflect, and to brood upon eternal beauty. It is the mystic who finds all that is most precious in life. The flowers of meditation blossom in his heart.'

I cut out these words and pasted them in my hat. I have always felt that my real genius lies in the direction of philosophic calm. I determined to override the brutal clamour of petty things.

The alarm clock rang as usual at 6.30. Calmly, with nothing but lovely thoughts in my mind, I threw it out of the window. I lay until eight o'clock, communing with infinite peace. I began to see that Professor Tagore was right. My wife asked me if I was going to the office.

'I am brooding upon eternal beauty,' I told her.

She thought I was ill, and made me take breakfast in bed.

I usually shave every morning, but a moment's thought will convince you that mystics do not do so. I determined to grow a beard. I lit a cigar, and replied 'I am a mystic' to all my wife's inquiries.

At nine o'clock came a telephone call from the office. My employer is not a devotee of eternal calm, I fear.

When I explained that I was at home reading *Gitanjali*, his language was far from mystical. 'Get here by ten o'clock or you lose your job,' he said.

I was dismayed to see the same old throng in the subway, all the senseless scuffle and the unphilosophic crowd. But I felt full of gladness in my new way of life, full of brotherhood for all the world. 'I love you,' I said to the guard on the platform. He seized me by the shoulders and rammed me into the crowded car, shouting 'Another nut!'

When I reached the office my desk was littered with a hundred papers. The stenographer was at the telephone, trying to pacify some one. 'Here he is now,' I heard her say.

It was Dennis & Company on the wire.

'How about that carload of Bavarian herrings we were to have yesterday without fail?' said Dennis.

I took the 'phone.

'In God's good time,' I said, 'the shipment will arrive. The matter is purely ephemeral, after all. If you will attune yourself –'

He rang off.

I turned over the papers on my desk. Looked at with the unclouded eye of a mystic, how mundane and unnecessary all these pettifogging transactions seemed. Two kegs of salt halibut for the Cameron Stores, proofs of the weekly ad. for the *Fishmongers' Journal*, a telegram from the Uptown Fish Morgue, new tyres needed for one of the delivery trucks – how could I jeopardize my faculty of meditation by worrying over these trifles? I leaned back in my chair and devoted myself to meditation. After all, the harassing domination of material things can easily be

thrown off by a resolute soul. I was full of infinite peace. I seemed to see the future as an ever-widening vista of sublime visions. My soul was thrilled with a universal love of humanity.

The buzzer on my desk sounded. That meant that the boss wanted to see me.

Now, it has always seemed to me that to put one's self at the beck and call of another man is essentially degrading. In the long perspective of eternity, was his soul any more majestic than mine? In this luminous new vision of my importance as a fragment of immortal mind, could I, should I, bow to the force of impertinent trivialities?

I sat back in my chair, full of love of humanity.

By and by the boss appeared at my desk. One look at his face convinced me of the truth of Tagore's saying that great activity is poison to the soul. Certainly his face was poisonous.

'Say,' he shouted, 'what the devil's the matter with you to-day? Dennis just called me up about that herring order –'

'Master,' I said mildly, 'be not overwrought. Great activity is a strychnine to the soul. I am a mystic. . . .'

A little later I found myself on the street with two weeks' pay in my pocket. It is true that my departure had been hasty and unpleasant, for the stairway from the office to the street is long and dusty; but I recalled what Professor Tagore had said about vicissitudes being the true revealers of the spirit. My hat was not with me, but I remembered the creed pasted in it. After pacing a block or so, my soul was once more tranquil.

I entered a restaurant. It was the noon hour, and the

room was crowded with hurrying waiters and impatient people. I found a vacant seat in a corner and sat down. I concentrated my mind upon the majestic vision of the brotherhood of man.

Gradually I began to feel hungry, but no waiter came near me. Never mind, I thought: to shout and hammer the table as the others do is beneath the dignity of a philosopher. I began to dream of endless vistas of mystical ham and eggs. I brooded upon these for some time, but still no corporeal and physical units of food reached me.

The man next me gradually materialized into my consciousness. Full of love for humanity I spoke to him.

'Brother,' I said, 'until one of these priestly waiters draws nigh, will you not permit me to sustain myself with one of your rolls and one of your butter-balls? In the great brotherhood of humanity, all that is mine is yours; and *per contra*, all that is yours is mine.' Beaming luminously upon him, I laid a friendly hand on his arm.

He leaped up and called the head-waiter. 'Here's an attic for rent!' he cried coarsely. 'He wants to pick my pocket.'

By the time I got away from the police station it was dusk, and I felt ready for home. I must say my broodings upon eternal beauty were beginning to be a little forced. As I passed along the crowded street, walking slowly and withdrawn into the quiet of my soul, three people trod upon my heels and a taxi nearly gave me a passport to eternity. I reflected that men were perhaps not yet ready for these doctrines of infinite peace. How much more wise were the animals – and I raised my hand to stroke a huge dray-horse by the pavement. He seized my fingers in his teeth and nipped them vigorously.

I gave a yell and ran full tilt to the nearest subway entrance. I burst into the mass of struggling, unphilosophic humanity and fought, shoved, cursed, and buffeted with them. I pushed three old ladies to one side to snatch my ticket before they could get theirs. I leaped into the car at the head of a flying wedge of sinful, unmystical men, who knew nothing of infinite beauty and peace. As the door closed I pushed a decrepit clergyman outside, and I hope he fell on the third rail. As I felt the lurching, trampling, throttling jam of humanity sway to and fro with the motion of the car, I drew a long breath. Dare I confess it? – I was perfectly happy!

ON GOING TO BED

ONE of the characters in *The Moon and Sixpence* remarked that he had faithfully lived up to the old precept about doing every day two things you heartily dislike; for, said he, every day he had got up and he had gone to bed.

It is a sad thing that as soon as the hands of the clock have turned ten the shadow of going to bed begins to creep over the evening. We have never heard bedtime spoken of with any enthusiasm. One after another we have seen a gathering disperse, each person saying (with an air of solemn resignation): 'Well, I guess I'll go to bed.' But there was no hilarity about it. It is really rather touching how they cling to the departing skirts of the day that is vanishing under the spinning shadow of night.

This is odd, we repeat, for sleep is highly popular among human beings. The reluctance to go to one's couch is not at all a reluctance to slumber, for almost all of us will doze happily in an arm-chair or on a sofa, or even festooned on the floor with a couple of cushions. But the actual and formal yielding to sheets and blankets is to be postponed to the last possible moment.

The devil of drowsiness is at his most potent, we find, about 10.30 p.m. At this period the human carcass seems to consider that it has finished its cycle, which began with so much courage nearly sixteen hours before. It begins to slack and the mind halts on a dead centre every now and then, refusing to complete the revolution. Now there are those who hold that this is certainly the seemly and appointed time to go to bed and they do so as a matter of

routine. These are, commonly, the happier creatures, for they take the tide of sleep at the flood and are borne calmly and with gracious gentleness out to great waters of nothingness. They push off from the wharf on a tranquil current and nothing more is to be seen or heard of these voyagers until they reappear at the breakfast table, digging lustily into their grapefruit.

These people are happy, aye, in a brutish and sedentary fashion, but they miss the admirable adventures of those more embittered wrestlers who will not give in without a struggle. These latter suffer severe pangs between 10.30 and about 11.15 while they grapple with their fading faculties and seek to re-establish the will on its tottering throne. This requires courage stout, valour unbending. Once you yield, be it ever so little, to the tempter, you are lost. And here our poor barren clay plays us false, undermining the intellect with many a trick and wile. 'I will sit down for a season in that comfortable chair,' the creature says to himself, 'and read this sprightly novel. That will ease my mind and put me in humour for a continuance of lively thinking.' And the end of that man is a steady nasal buzz from the bottom of the chair where he has collapsed, an unsightly object and a disgrace to humanity. This also means a big bill from the electric light company at the end of the month. In many such ways will his corpus bewray him, leading him by plausible self-deceptions into a pitfall of sleep, whence he is aroused about 3 a.m. when the planet turns over on the other side. Only by stiff perseverance and rigid avoidance of easy chairs may the critical hour between 10.30 and 11.30 be safely passed. Tobacco, a self-brewed pot of tea, and a browsing along bookshelves

(remain standing and do not sit down with your book) are helps in this time of struggle. Even so, there are some happily drowsy souls who can never cross these shallows alone without grounding on the Lotus Reefs. Our friend J – D – K –, magnificent creature, was (when we lived with him) so potently hypnophil that, even erect and determined at his bookcase and urgently bent upon Brann's *Iconoclast* or some other literary irritant, sleep would seep through his pores and he would fall with a crash, lying there in unconscious bliss until some one came in and prodded him up, reeling and ashamed.

But, as we started to say, those who survive this drastic weeding out which Night imposes upon her wooers – so as to cull and choose only the truly meritorious lovers – experience supreme delights which are unknown to their snoring fellows. When the struggle with somnolence has been fought out and won, when the world is all-covering darkness and close-pressing silence, when the tobacco suddenly takes on fresh vigour and fragrance and the books lie strewn about the table, then it seems as though all the rubbish and floating matter of the day's thoughts have poured away, and only the bright, clear, and swift current of the mind itself remains, flowing happily and without impediment. This perfection of existence is not to be reached very often; but when properly approached it may be won. It is a different mind that one uncovers then, a spirit which is lucid and hopeful, to which (for a few serene hours) time exists not. The friable resolutions of the day are brought out again and re-cemented and chiselled anew. Surprising schemes are started and carried through to happy conclusion, lifetimes of amazement are lived in a

few passing ticks. There is one who at such moments resolves, with complete sincerity, to start at one end of the top shelf and read again all the books in his library, intending this time really to extract their true marrow. He takes a clean sheet of paper and sets down memoranda of all the people he intends to write to, and all the plumbers and what not that he will call up the next day. And the next time this happy seizure attacks him he will go through the same gestures again without surprise and without the slightest mortification. And then, having lived a generation of good works since midnight struck, he summons all his resolution and goes to bed.

A CASUAL OF THE SEA

He that will learn to pray, let him go to sea.
— GEORGE HERBERT

BOOKS sometimes make surprising connections with life. Fifteen-year-old Tommy Jonkers, shipping as O. S. (ordinary seaman) on the s.s. *Fernfield* in Glasgow in 1911, could hardly have suspected that the second engineer would write a novel and put him in it; or that that same novel would one day lift him out of fo'c'sle and galley and set him working for a publishing house on far-away Long Island. Is it not one more proof of the surprising power of the written word?

For Tommy is not one of those who expect to find their names in print. The mere sight of his name on a newspaper page, in an article I wrote about him, brought (so he naïvely told me) tears to his eyes. Excellent, simple-hearted Tommy! How little did you think, when you signed on to help the *Fernfield* carry coal from Glasgow to Alexandria, that the long arm of the Miehle press was already waiting for you; that thousands of good people reading a certain novel would be familiar with your 'round rosy face and clear sea-blue eyes.'

'Tommy' (whose real name is Drevis) was born in Amsterdam in 1896. His father was a fireman at sea, and contributed next to nothing to the support of Tommy and his pretty little sister Greta. They lived with their grandmother, near the quays in Amsterdam, where the masts of ships and the smell of tar interfered with their lessons. Bread and treacle for breakfast, black beans for lunch, a

fine thick stew and plenty more bread for supper – that and the Dutch school where he stood near the top of his class are what Tommy remembers best of his boyhood. His grandmother took in washing, and had a hard time keeping the little family going. She was a fine, brusque old lady, and as Tommy went off to school in the mornings she used to frown at him from the upstairs window because his hands were in his pockets. For as everybody knows, only slouchy good-for-nothings walk to school with pocketed hands.

Tommy did so well in his lessons that he was one of the star pupils given the privilege of learning an extra language in the evenings. He chose English because most of the sailors he met talked English, and his great ambition was to be a seaman. His uncle was a quartermaster in the Dutch navy, and his father was at sea; and Tommy's chance soon came.

After school hours he used to sell postcards, cologne, soap, chocolates, and other knick-knacks to the sailors, to earn a little cash to help his grandmother. One afternoon in the spring of 1909 he was down on the docks with his little packet of wares, when a school friend came running to him.

'Drevis, Drevis!' he shouted, 'they want a mess-room boy on the *Queen Eleanor*!'

It didn't take Drevis long to get aboard the *Queen Eleanor*, a British tramp out of Glasgow, bound for Hamburg and Vladivostok. He accosted the chief engineer, his blue eyes shining eagerly.

'Yes,' says the Chief, 'I need a mess-room steward right away – we sail at four o'clock.'

'Try me!' pipes Drevis. (Bless us, the boy was barely thirteen!)

The Chief roars with laughter.

'Too small!' he says.

Drevis insisted that he was just the boy for mess-room steward.

'Well,' says the Chief, 'go home and put on a pair of long pants and come back again. Then we'll see how you look!'

Tommy ran home rejoicing. His Uncle Hendrick was a small man, and Tommy grabbed a pair of his trousers. Thus fortified, he hastened back to the *Queen Eleanor*. The Chief cackled, but he took him on at two pounds five a month.

Tommy didn't last long as mess-room boy. He broke so many cups the engineers had to drink out of dippers, and they degraded him to cabin boy at a pound a month. Even as cabin boy he was no instant success. He used to forget to empty the chief's slop-pail, and the water would overflow the cabin. He felt the force of a stout sea boot not a few times in learning the golden rubric of the tramp steamer's cabin boy.

'Drevis' was a strange name to the English seamen, and they christened him 'Tommy,' and that handle turns him still.

Tommy's blue eyes and honest Netherland grin and easy temper kept him friendly with all the world. The winds of chance sent him scudding about the globe, a true casual of the seas. His first voyage as A. B. was on the *Fernfield* in 1911, and there he met a certain Scotch engineer. This engineer had a habit of being interested in human problems, and Tommy's guileless phiz attracted him. Under his

tutelage Tommy acquired a thirst for promotion, and soon climbed to the rank of quartermaster.

One thing that always struck Tommy was the number of books the engineer had in his cabin. A volume of Nat Gould, Ouida or *The Duchess* would be the largest library Tommy would have found in the other bunks; but here, before his wondering gaze, were Macaulay, Gibbon, Gorki, Conrad, Dickens, Zola, Shakespeare, Montaigne, Chaucer, Shaw, and what not. And what would Master Tommy have said had he known that his friend, even then, was working on a novel in which he, Tommy, would play an important rôle?

The years went by. On sailing ships, on steam tramps, on private yachts, as seaman, as quartermaster, as cook's helper, Tommy drifted about the world. One day when he was twenty years old he was rambling about New York just before sailing for Liverpool on the steam yacht *Alvina*. He was one of a strictly neutral crew (the United States was still neutral in those days) signed on to take a millionaire's pet plaything across the wintry ocean. She had been sold to the Russian Government.

Tommy was passing through the arcade of the Pennsylvania Station when his eye fell upon the book-shop there. He was startled to see in the window a picture of the Scotch engineer – his best friend, the only man in the world who had ever been like a father to him. He knew that the engineer was far away in the Mediterranean, working on an English transport. He scanned the poster with amazement.

Apparently his friend had written a book. Tommy, like a practical seaman, went to the heart of the matter. He

went into the shop and bought the book. He fell into talk with the bookseller, who had read the book. He told the bookseller that he had known the author, and that for years they had served together on the same vessels at sea. He told how the writer, who was the former second engineer of the *Fernfield*, had done many things for the little Dutch lad whose own father had died at sea. Then came another surprise.

'I believe you're one of the characters in the story,' said the bookseller.

It was so. The book was *Casuals of the Sea*, the author, William McFee, who had been a steamship engineer for a dozen years; and Drevis Jonkers found himself described in full in the novel as 'Drevis Noordhof,' and playing a leading part in the story. Can you imagine the simple sailor's surprise and delight? Pleased beyond measure, in his soft Dutch accent liberally flavoured with cockney he told the bookseller how Mr. McFee had befriended him, had urged him to go on studying navigation so that he might become an officer; and that though they had not met for several years he still receives letters from his friend, full of good advice about saving his money, where to get cheap lodgings in Brooklyn, and not to fall into the common error of sailors in thinking that Hoboken and Passyunk Avenue are all America. And Tommy went back to his yacht chuckling with delight, with a copy of *Casuals of the Sea* under his arm.

Here my share in the adventure begins. The bookseller, knowing my interest in the book, hastened to tell me the next time I saw him that one of the characters in the story was in New York. I wrote to Tommy asking him to come

to see me. He wrote that the *Alvina* was to sail the next day, and he could not get away. I supposed the incident was closed.

Then I saw in the papers that the *Alvina* had been halted in the Narrows by a United States destroyer, the Government having suspected that her errand was not wholly neutral. Rumour had it that she was on her way to the Azores, there to take on armament for the house of Romanoff. She was halted at the Quarantine Station at Staten Island, pending an investigation.

Then enters the elbow of coincidence. Looking over some books in the very same book-shop where Tommy had bought his friend's novel, I overheard another member of the *Alvina's* crew asking about *Casuals of the Sea*. His chum Tommy had told him about his adventure, and he, too, was there to buy one. (Not every day does one meet one's friends walking in a 500–page novel!) By the never-to-be-sufficiently-admired hand of chance I was standing at Joe Hogan's very elbow when he began explaining to the book clerk that he was a friend of the Dutch sailor who had been there a few days before.

So a few days later, behold me on the Staten Island ferry, on my way to see Tommy and the *Alvina*.

I'm afraid I would always desert the office if there's a plausible excuse to bum about the water-front. Is there any passion in the breast of mankind more absorbing than the love of ships? A tall Cunarder putting out to sea gives me a keener thrill than anything the Polo Grounds or the Metropolitan Opera can show. Of what avail a meeting of the Authors' League when one can know the sights, sounds, and smells of West or South Street? I used to

lug volumes of Joseph Conrad down to the West Street piers to give them to captains and first mates of liners, and get them to talk about the ways of the sea. That was how I met Captain Claret of the *Minnehaha*, that prince of seamen; and Mr. Pape, of the *Orduña*, Mr. Jones of the *Lusitania*, and many another. They knew all about Conrad, too. There were five volumes of Conrad in the officers' cabins on the *Lusitania* when she went down, God rest her. I know, because I put them there.

And the Staten Island ferry is a voyage on the Seven Seas for the landlubber. After months of office work, how one's heart leaps to greet our old mother the sea! How drab, flat, and humdrum seem the ways of earth in comparison to the hardy and austere life of ships! There on every hand go the gallant shapes of vessels – the *James L. Morgan*, dour little tug, shoving two barges; *Themistocles*, at anchor, with the blue and white Greek colours painted on her rusty flank; the *Comanche* outward bound, for Galveston (I think); the *Ascalon*, full-rigged ship, with blue-jerseyed sailormen out on her bowsprit snugging the canvas. And who is so true a lover of the sea as one who can suffer the ultimate indignities – and love her still! I am queasy as soon as I sight Sandy Hook. . . .

At the quarantine station I had a surprise. The *Alvina* was not there. One old roustabout told me he thought she had gone to sea. I was duly taken aback. Had I made the two-hour trip for nothing? Then another came to my aid. 'There she is, up in the bight,' he said. I followed his gesture, and saw her – a long, slim white hull, a cream-coloured funnel with a graceful rake; the Stars and Stripes

fresh painted in two places on her shining side. I hailed a motor-boat to take me out. The boatman wanted three dollars, and I offered one. He protested that the yacht was interned and he had no right to take visitors out anyway. He'd get into trouble with '39' – '39' being a United States destroyer lying in the Narrows a few hundred yards away. After some bickering we compromised on a dollar and a quarter.

That was a startling adventure for the humble publisher's reader! Wallowing in an ice-glazed motor-boat, in the lumpy water of a 'bight' – surrounded by ships and the men who sail them – I might almost have been a hardy newspaper man! But Long Island commuters are nurtured to a tough and perilous life, and I clambered the *Alvina's* side without dropping hat, stick, or any of my pocketful of manuscripts.

Joe Hogan, the steward, was there in his white jacket. He introduced me to the cook, the bosun, the 'chief,' the wireless, and the 'second.' The first officer was too heavy with liquor to notice the arrival of a stranger. Messrs. Haig and Haig, those *Dioscuri* of seamen, had been at work. The skipper was ashore. He owns a saloon.

The *Alvina* is a lovely little vessel, 215 feet long, they told me, and about 525 tons. She is fitted with mahogany throughout; the state-rooms all have brass double beds and private bathrooms attached; she has her own wireless telegraph and telephone, refrigerating apparatus, and everything to make the owner and his guests comfortable. But her beautiful furnishings were tumbled this way and that in preparation for the sterner duties that lay before her. The lower deck was cumbered with sacks of coal lashed

down. A transatlantic voyage in January is likely to be a lively one for a yacht of 500 tons.

I found Tommy below in his bunk, cleaning up. He is a typical Dutch lad – round, open face, fair hair, and guileless blue eyes. He showed me all his treasures – his certificates of good conduct from all the ships (both sail and steam) in which he has served; a picture of his mother, who died when he was six; and of his sister Greta – a very pretty girl – who is also mentioned in *Casuals of the Sea*. The drunken fireman in the story who dies after a debauch was Tommy's father who died in the same way. And with these other treasures Tommy showed me a packet of letters from Mr. McFee.

I do not want to offend Mr. McFee by describing his letters to this Dutch sailor-boy as 'sensible,' but that is just what they were. Tommy is one of his own 'casuals' –

> – those frail craft upon the restless Sea
> Of Human Life, who strike the rocks uncharted,
> Who loom, sad phantoms, near us, drearily,
> Storm-driven, rudderless, with timbers started –

and these sailormen who drift from port to port on the winds of chance are most in need of sound Ben Franklin advice. Save your money; put it in the bank; read books; go to see the museums, libraries, and art galleries; get to know something about this great America if you intend to settle down there – that is the kind of word Tommy gets from his friend.

Gradually, as I talked with him, I began to see into the laboratory of life where *Casuals of the Sea* originated. This book is valuable because it is a triumphant expression of

the haphazard, strangely woven chances that govern the lives of the humble. In Tommy's honest, gentle face, and in the talk of his shipmates when we sat down to dinner together, I saw a microcosm of the strange barren life of the sea where men float about for years like driftwood. And out of all this ebbing tide of aimless, happy-go-lucky humanity McFee had chanced upon this boy from Amsterdam and had tried to pound into him some good sound commonsense.

When I left her that afternoon, the *Alvina* was getting up steam, and she sailed within a few hours. I had eaten and talked with her crew, and for a short space had a glimpse of the lives and thoughts of the simple, childlike men who live in ships. I realized for the first time the truth of that background of aimless hazard that makes *Casuals of the Sea* a book of more than passing merit.

As for Tommy, the printed word had him in thrall though he knew it not. When he got back from Liverpool, two months later, I found him a job in the engine room of a big printing press. He was set to work oiling the dynamos, and at ten dollars a week he had a fine chance to work his way up. Indeed, he enrolled in a Scranton correspondence course on steam engineering, and enchanted his Hempstead landlady by his simple ways. That lasted just two weeks. The level ground made Tommy's feet uneasy. The last I heard he was on a steam yacht on Long Island Sound.

But wherever steam and tide may carry him, Tommy cherishes in his heart his own private badge of honour: his friend the engineer has put him in a book! And there, in one of the noblest and most honest novels of our day, you will find him – a casual of the sea!

DAME QUICKLY AND THE BOILROASTER

SOMETHING had happened to Dame Quickly's storage battery, and all the amperes seemed to have escaped. An extremely friendly and cheerful young man came up from Fred Seaman's garage, with mysterious medical-looking instruments, to grant a consultation. In the course of the chat he remarked, 'If you once ride in a *Boilroaster* car, you'll never be satisfied with any other.'

His energetic hands were at that moment deep in our loved Dame Quickly's mechanisms; she was wholly at his mercy; naturally we did not feel like contradicting him or saying anything tactless. We wondered, but only privately, whether the fact that Fred Seaman is the local agent for the *Boilroaster* had anything to do with this comment? Or perhaps, we thought to ourself, our friend the battery expert really is a convinced enthusiast for the *Boilroaster*, and felt that way about it before he took a job at Fred Seaman's establishment? We were sorry that William James was dead, for we felt that the author of *The Will to Believe* would be the man to whom to submit this philosophical problem. We were puzzled, because only a few days earlier another man had said to us (with an equal accent of decisiveness and conviction) that he would rather have a Dame Quickly than any *Boilroaster* ever made. 'They stand up better than any of 'em,' he had said. Suddenly it occurred to us how useful it would be if there were some kind of spiritual gauge – like the hydrometer our friend was plunging into the cells of the Dame's battery – which one could dip into a man's mind to test the intellectual mixture of his remarks; to evaluate the

proportions of those various liquids (the strong acid of self-interest, the mild distilled water of candour, etc.) which electrify his mental ignition.

Well, how about the *Boilroaster*, we said – (searching for a technical term that would show him we are a practical man) – Do they stand up?

He suggested that we get into his own *Boilroaster*, which stood grandly overshining the dusty Dame (reminding us of those pictures where a silhouette of the new *Majestic* is placed behind a little picture of the *Teutonic* or some other humble ship of older days) and take a run around Salamis while he tinkered with the battery.

Oh, no, we said nervously. Dame Quickly is the only car we know how to run, and besides the gear shift is different in the *Boilroaster*; we might get confused and have to come all the way home in reverse, which would be bad for our reputation in the village.

Have you ever ridden in the *Boilroaster*? he asked.

Yes, we said – Fred Seaman took us over to Locust Valley the other evening. (Suddenly a horrid thought struck us. We had thought that Fred had given us that lift over to Locust Valley just in the goodness of his heart. But now we wondered –)

When he left, he put in our hand a handsome book all about the *Boilroaster*. That, we felt, was the first step in breaking down our 'sales resistance,' as they say in the *Business e*19 Course up at Columbia.

We've been reading that book, and we want to say that the chaps who write that sort of literature are cunning fellows, and masters of a very insinuating prose style. They begin with a very pretty frontispiece of a

Boilroaster car standing, all alone and dazzling-new, in a magnificent landscape of snow-clad peaks and clear lakes. How the *Boilroaster* got way up there (evidently somewhere near Banff) without anyone driving her, and without even a speck of dust on her fenders, is a mystery. But there she is. Perhaps the man who drove her all those miles from the nearest distributing agency is at the bar of the C. P. R. Hotel, off behind those pine forests.

All the highbrow critics will tell you that the truly great writers are lovers of Beauty. Well, the anonymous author of the *Boilroaster* book is as keen a champion of Beauty as anyone we ever heard of. And not only beauty, but refinement, too. There are two whole pages giving little pictures of 'refinements.' This is a book, we think, that could be put in the hands of the young without any hesitation. In fact, that is just where we did put it, for the urchin is cutting out the pictures of *Boilroasters* at this very minute. The whole trend of Advertising nowadays (we wonder if they mention this in the lectures on Advertising Psychology up at Columbia) is to give delight to children. We would hate to tell the Cunard Line and the International Mercantile Marine Company how many of their folders our juveniles have scissored up with shouts of delight.

The *Boilroaster* book is going to be a lesson to us. We don't know if we will ever own a *Boilroaster*, but we are certain that before we do we have got to spruce up and be a bit more genteel. At present, we would be a bit of anticlimax riding in a car like that. There is 'new beauty in its double bevel body line.' We want to look a bit more

streamline ourself before we go in for one. There are 'massive head-lamps, graceful cowl lights, the louvres are more in number and their edges show a smart touch of gold.' There is 'a courtesy light illuminating the left side of the car,' and a ventilator in the cowl. We don't know exactly what the cowl is, or the louvres, or at any rate we've never discovered them in Dame Quickly.

Just as we are writing this, we see a headline in the papers (in the *Evening Post*, to be accurate) about Sir Charles Higham, who 'Sees Advertising as a Great Moral Force.' We know of no writer who has a more solid appreciation of moral forces than the author of our *Boilroaster* brochure. What he has to say about 'sheer merit,' 'sound principles,' 'elimination of waste,' 'combination of beauty and utility,' 'superiority and refinement,' 'good taste' and 'harmony of colour' makes this work a genuine essay in æsthetics. Moreover, we like his agile cheerfulness. When the car has a 126-inch wheelbase, it makes it very easy riding and gives it charming 'roadability.' When it has a 119-inch wheelbase, it 'gives a short turning radius which makes it remarkably easy to handle.' Even in the least details, our author has an eye for loveliness. He confesses himself struck by 'the attractive grouping of instruments on the dash, which emphasizes *Boilroaster* individuality.' The upholstery, he says, is 'restful.' The folding seat for the extra passenger is 'in reality a comfortable chair.' And when we learn that the opalescent dome and corner lamps 'provide enough light for reading,' our only regret is that he doesn't add a suggested list of readings for tenants of a *Boilroaster* Enormous Eight.

Unhappily space is lacking to tell you in detail what a competent and winning fellow this author is. In the scientific portions of the work he rivals Fabre – in regard to the clutch, he says 'the driven member is a single spider rotating between two rings.' His passion for elegance, comfort, simplicity, and economy has never been surpassed – no, not by Plato or Walter Pater. The only drawback about his essay is that we feel we could never live up to the vehicle he describes.

WHAT a delicate and rare and gracious art is the art of conversation! With what a dexterity and skill the bubble of speech must be manœuvred if mind is to meet and mingle with mind.

There is no sadder disappointment than to realize that a conversation has been a complete failure. By which we mean that it has failed in blending or isolating for contrast the ideas, opinions, and surmises of two eager minds. So often a conversation is ship-wrecked by the very eagerness of one member to contribute. There must be give and take, parry and thrust, patience to hear and judgment to utter. How uneasy is the qualm as one looks back on an hour's talk and sees that the opportunity was wasted; the precious instant of intercourse gone forever: the secrets of the heart still incommunicate. Perhaps we were too anxious to hurry the moment, to enforce our own theory, to adduce instance from our own experience. Perhaps we were not patient enough to wait until our friend could express himself with ease and happiness. Perhaps we squandered the dialogue in tangent topics, in a multitude of irrelevances.

How few, how few are those gifted for real talk! There are fine merry fellows, full of mirth and shrewdly minted observation, who will not abide by one topic, who must always be lashing out upon some new by-road, snatching at every bush they pass. They are too excitable, too ungoverned for the joys of patient intercourse. Talk is so solemn a rite it should be approached with prayer, and must be conducted with nicety and for-

bearance. What steadiness and sympathy are needed if the thread of thought is to be unwound without tangles or snapping! What forbearance, while each of the pair, after tentative gropings here and yonder, feels his way toward truth as he sees it. So often two in talk are like men standing back to back, each trying to describe to the other what he sees and disputing because their visions do not tally. It takes a little time for minds to turn face to face.

Very often conversations are better among three than between two, for the reason that then one of the trio is always, unconsciously, acting as umpire, interposing fair play, recalling wandering wits to the nub of the argument, seeing that the aggressiveness of one does no foul to the reticence of another. Talk in twos may, alas! fall into speaker and listener: talk in threes rarely does so.

It is little realized how slowly, how painfully, we approach the expression of truth. We are so variable, so anxious to be polite, and alternately swayed by caution or anger. The mind oscillates like a pendulum: it takes some time for it to come to rest. And then, the proper allowance and correction has to be made for our individual vibrations that prevent accuracy. Even the compass needle doesn't point the true north, but only the magnetic north. Similarly our minds at best can but indicate magnetic truth, and are distorted by many things that act as iron filings do on the compass. The necessity of holding one's job: what an iron filing that is on the compass card of a man's brain!

We are all afraid of truth: we keep a battalion of our

pet prejudices and precautions ready to throw into the argument as shock troops, rather than let our fortress of Truth be stormed. We have smoke bombs and decoy ships and all manner of cunning colourizations by which we conceal our innards from our friends, and even from ourselves. How we fume and fidget, how we bustle and dodge rather than commit ourselves.

In days of hurry and complication, in the incessant pressure of human problems that thrust our days behind us, does one never dream of a way of life in which talk would be honoured and exalted to its proper place in the sun? What a zest there is in that intimate unreserved exchange of thought, in the pursuit of the magical blue bird of joy and human satisfaction that may be seen flitting distantly through the branches of life. It was a sad thing for the world when it grew so busy that men had no time to talk. There are such treasures of knowledge and compassion in the minds of our friends, could we only have time to talk them out of their shy quarries. If we had our way, we would set aside one day a week for talking. In fact, we would reorganize the week altogether. We would have one day for Worship (let each man devote it to worship of whatever he holds dearest); one day for Work; one day for Play (probably fishing); one day for Talking; one day for Reading, and one day for Smoking and Thinking. That would leave one day for Resting, and (incidentally) interviewing employers.

The best week of our life was one in which we did nothing but talk. We spent it with a delightful gentleman who has a little bungalow on the shore of a lake

in Pike County. He had a great many books and cigars, both of which are conversational stimulants. We used to lie out on the edge of the lake, in our oldest trousers, and talk. We discussed ever so many subjects; in all of them he knew immensely more than we did. We built up a complete philosophy of indolence and good will, according to Food and Sleep and Swimming their proper share of homage. We rose at 10 in the morning and began talking; we talked all day and until 3 o'clock at night. Then we went to bed and regained strength and combativeness for the coming day. Never was a week better spent. We committed no crimes, planned no secret treaties, devised no annexations or indemnities. We envied no one. We examined the entire world and found it worth while. Meanwhile our wives, who were watching (perhaps with a little quiet indignation) from the veranda, kept on asking us, 'What on earth do you talk about?' Bless their hearts, men don't have to have anything to talk *about*. They just talk.

And there is only one rule for being a good talker: learn how to listen.

BROAD STREET STATION

BROAD STREET STATION is to me a place of extraordinary fascination. Among the cloudy memories of early childhood it stands solidly, a home of thunders and shouting, of gigantic engines with their fiery droppings of coal and sudden jets of steam. It was a place in which a delighted sense of adventure was closely mixed with fear. I remember being towed along, as a very small urchin, among throngs of hasty feet and past the prodigious glamour of those huge wheels and pistons. (Juvenile eyes are very close to the ground.) Then, arrived within, the ramping horses carved opposite the head of the stairs and the great map on the northern wall were a glorious excitement to my wondering gaze. Nowadays, when I ramble about the station its enchantment is enhanced by the recollection of those early adventures. And as most people, when passing through a station, are severely intent upon their own problems and little conscious of scrutiny, it is the best of places to study the great human show. Mr. Joseph Pennell, in a thrilling drawing, has given a perfect record of Broad Street's lights and tones that linger in the eye – the hurdling network of girders, the pattering files of passengers, the upward eddies of smoke.

A sense of baffling excitement and motion keeps the mind alert as one wanders about the station. In the dim, dusky twilight of the train shed this is all the more impressive. A grey-silver haze hangs in the great arches. Against the brightness of the western opening the locomotives come gliding in with a restful relaxation of effort,

black indistinguishable profiles. The locomotives are the only restful things in the scene – they and the red-capped porters, who have the priestly dignity of oracles who have laid aside all earthly passions. Most of the human elements wear the gestures of eagerness, struggle and perplexity. The Main Line commuters, it is true, seem to stroll trainward like a breed apart, with an air of leisurely conquest and assurance. They have the bearing of veterans who have conquered the devils of transportation and hold them in leash. But this superb carelessness is only factitious. Some day their time will come and they will fall like the rest of us. They will career frantically to and fro, dash to information desk and train bulletin, rummage for tickets and wipe a beaded brow. What gesture, incidentally, is so significantly human as that of mopping the forehead? If I were a sculptor at work on a symbolic statue of Man I would carve him with troubled and vacant eyes, dehydrating his brow with a handkerchief.

Take your stand by the train gate a few moments before the departure of the New York express. What a medley of types, and what a common touch of anxiety and wistfulness makes them kin! Two ladies are bidding each other a prolonged farewell. 'Now, remember, 7, Howland Street, Cambridge,' says the departer. 'Be sure to write!' A feverish man rushes back from the train, having forgotten something, and fights his way against the line which is filing through the gate. Another man hunts dismally through all his pockets for his ticket, rocking gently and thoughtfully on his heels. The ticket seems to have vanished. He pushes his hat back on his

forehead and says something to the collector. This new posture of his hat seems to aid him, for in another half minute the ticket appears in a pocket that he has already gone through several times. The official cons his watch every five seconds. A clerk, apparently from one of the ticket windows, rushes up with a long strip ticket. There is some question about a sailor with a furlough ticket to Providence. Has he gone through? Haven't seen him. The gateman claps the gate to and switches off the light. Three other men come dashing up and are let through by the kindness of the usher. Then comes the sailor galloping along with a heavy suitcase. 'Here he is! Here's your ticket!' Again the gate is opened and the navy man tears down the platform. The train is already moving, but he just makes it. Far out, in the bright sunlight beyond the station, the engine can be seen pulling out, ejecting a stiff spire of smoke and horizontal billows of steam.

At the same time rumbles in the hourly express from New York. Watch the people come out. Here is the brisk little man with a brown bag, who always leads the crowd. The men from the smoker are first, puffing pipes or cigars. They all seem to know exactly where they want to go, and push on relentlessly. After the main body of travellers come the Pullman passengers, usually followed by porters. Here is a girl in a very neat blue suit. Her porter carries an enormous black hat-box, painted with very swagger stripes of green. She is pretty, in a rather frank way, but too dusty with powder. An actress, one supposes. A tall young man steps out from the crowd, something very rakish about him, too. She

looks surprised. 'Nice of me to meet you, wasn't it?' he says. They walk off together, and one notices the really admirable hang of her blue skirt, just reaching her fawn spats. Sorry she uses so much powder. Curious thing; the same young chap was back again an hour later, this time to meet a man on the next New York train. They both wore brightly burnished brown shoes and seemed to have completely mastered life's perplexities. All these little dramas were enacted to a merry undertone of constant sound: the clear chime of bells, the murmur and throb of hissing steam, the rumble of baggage trucks, the slither of thousands of feet.

There is not much kissing done when people arrive from New York, but if you will linger about the gate when the Limited gets in from Chicago you will see that humanity pays more affectionate tribute to friends arriving from that farther country. There was one odd little group of three. A man and a woman greeted another lady who arrived on the Chicago train. The two women kissed with a luxurious smacking. Then the man and the arrival kissed. The Chicago lady wore an enormous tilted hat with plumes. 'Well, I'm here,' she said, but without any great enthusiasm. The man was obviously frightfully glad to see her. But stand how he would, she kept the slant of her hat between her face and him. He tried valiantly to get a straight look at her. She would not meet his gaze. He put his head on one side astonishingly like a rooster, and his whole attitude expressed an earnest desire to please. When he spoke to her she answered to the other woman. She handed him her baggage checks without looking

at him. Then she pointed to a very heavy package at her feet. With a weary resignation he toted it, and they moved away.

Inside the station the world is divided sharply into two halves. On the trainward side all is bustle and stir; the bright colours of news-stands and flower stalls, brisk consultation of time-tables at the information desk, little telephone booths, where lights wink on and off. In one of these booths, with the door open for greater coolness, a buyer is reporting to his home office the results of an out-of-town trip. 'How much did you sold of that?' he says. 'He offered me a lot – pretty nice leather – he wanted seventy-five – well, listen, finally I offered him sixty-five – Oh, no, no, no, he claims it's a dollar grade – well, I don't know, it might be ninety cent maybe.'

But abaft the big stairway a quiet solemnity reigns. The long benches of the waiting-room seem a kind of Friends' meeting. Momently one expects to see some one rise and begin to speak. But it is not the peace of resignation; it is the peace of exhaustion. These are the wounded who have dragged themselves painfully from the onset, stricken on the great battlefield of Travel. Here one may note the passive patience of humanity, and also how pathetically it hoards its little possessions. A lady rises to get a drink of water. With what zealous care she stacks all her impediments in a neat pile – umbrella, satchel, handbag, shawl, suitcase, tippet, raincoat and baby – and confides them to her companion. A gust of that characteristic railroad restaurant odour drifts outward from the dining-room – a warm, soupy blend of

brown chicken-skin and crisp roll-crust. On one end of the bench are three tall bronzed doughboys, each with two service stripes and the red chevron. They have bright blue eyes and are carefully comparing their strip tickets, which seem nearly a yard long. A lady in very tight black suède slippers stilts out of the dining-room. Like every one else in the waiting-room she walks as though her feet hurt her. The savour of food is blown outward by electric fans. The doughboys are conferring together. They have noticed two lieutenants dining at one of the white-draped tables. This seems to enrage them. Finally they can stand it no longer. Their vast rawhide marching boots go clumping into the dining-room. Every now and then the announcer comes to the head of the stairway and calls out something about a train to Harrisburg, Altoona, Pittsburgh and Chicago. There is a note of sadness in his long-drawn wail, as though it would break his heart if no one should take this train, which is a favourite of his. A few weary casuals hoist themselves from the benches, gather their belongings anew and stagger away.

THE SHORE IN SEPTEMBER

THE sands are lonely in the fall. On those broad New Jersey beaches, where the rollers sprawl inward in ridges of crumbling snow, the ocean looks almost wistfully for its former playmates. The children are gone, the small brown legs, the toy shovels and the red tin pails. The familiar figures of the summer season have vanished: the stout ladies who sat in awninged chairs and wrestled desperately to unfurl their newspapers in the wind; the handsome mahogany-tanned life-savers, the vamperinoes incessantly drying their tawny hair, the corpulent males of dark complexion wearing ladies' bathing caps, the young men playing a degenerate baseball with a rubber sphere and a bit of shingle. All that life and excitement, fed upon hot dogs and vanilla cones, anointed with cold cream and citronella, has vanished for another year.

But how pleasant it is to see the town (it is Fierceforest we have in mind) taking its own vacation, after labouring to amuse its visitors all summer long. Here and there in the surf you will see a familiar figure. That plump lady, lathered by sluicing combers as she welters and wambles upon Neptune's bosom, is good Frau Weintraub of the delicatessen, who has been frying fish and chowdering clams over a hot stove most of July and August, and now takes her earned repose. Yonder is the imposing bulge of the real estate agent, who has been too busy selling lots and dreaming hotel sites to visit the surf hitherto. Farther up the shore is the garage man, doing a little quiet fishing from the taffrail of a

deserted pier. The engineer of the 'roller coaster' smokes a cigar along the deserted Boardwalk and discusses the League of Nations with the gondolier-in-chief of the canals of Ye Olde Mill. The hot-dog expert, whose merry shout, 'Here they are, all red hot and fried in butter!' was wont to echo along the crowded arcade, has boarded up his stand and departed none knows where.

There is a tincture of grief in the survey of all this liveliness coffined and nailed down. Even the gambols of Fierceforest's citizens, taking their ease at last in the warm September surf, cannot wholly dispel the mournfulness of the observer. There is something dreadfully glum in the merry go-round seen through its locked glass doors. All those gaily caparisoned horses, with their bright Arabian housings, their flowing manes and tossing heads and scarlet-painted nostrils, stand stilled in the very gesture of glorious rotation. One remembers what a jolly sight that carousal was on a warm evening, the groaning pipes of the steam-organ chanting an adorable ditty (we don't know what it is, but it's the tune they always play at the movies when our favourite Dorothy Gish comes on the screen), children laughing and holding tight to the wooden manes of the horses, and flappers with their pink dresses swirling, clutching for the brass ring that means a free ride. All this is frozen into silence and sleep, like a scene in a fairy tale. It is very sad, and we dare not contemplate the poor little silent horses too long.

Bitterly does one lament the closing of the Boardwalk auction rooms, which were a perpetual free show to those who could not find a seat in the movies. There

was one auctioneer who looked so like Mr. Wilson that when we saw his earnest gestures we always expected that the League of Nations would be the subject of his harangue. But on entering and taking a seat (endeavouring to avoid his eye when he became too persuasive, for fear some involuntary gesture or the contortions of an approaching sneeze would be construed as a bid for a Chinese umbrella stand) we always found that it was a little black box full of teacups that was under discussion. He would hold one up against an electric bulb to show its transparency. When he found his audience unresponsive he would always say, 'You know I don't have to do this for a living. If you people don't appreciate goods that have quality, I'm going to pack up and go to Ocean City.' But he never went. Almost every evening, chagrined by some one's failure to bid properly for a cut-glass lady-finger container or a porcelain tooth-brush-rack, he would ask the attendant to set it aside. 'I'll buy it myself,' he would cry, and as he kept on buying these curious tit-bits for himself throughout the summer, we used to wonder what his wife would say when they all arrived.

Along the quiet Boardwalk we saunter, as the crisp breeze comes off the wide ocean spaces. Bang! bang! bang! sound the hammers, as the shutters go up on the beauty parlour, the toy shop, the shop where sweet-grass baskets were woven, and the stall where the little smiling doll known as Helene, the Endearing Beach Vamp, was to be won by knocking down two tenpins with a swinging pendulum. How easy it was to cozen the public with that! A bright red star was painted at the

back of the pendulum's swing, and the natural assumption of the simple competitor was that by aiming at that star he would win the smiling Helene. Of course, as long as one aimed at the star success was impossible. The Japanese dealers, with the pertinacity of their race, are almost the last to linger. Their innocent little gaming boards, their fishponds where one angles for counterfeit fish and draws an eggcup or a china cat, according to the number inscribed on the catch, their roulette wheels ('Ten Cents a Chance – No Blanks') – all are still in operation, but one of the shrewd Orientals is packing up some china at the back of the shop. He knows that trade is pretty well done for this season. We wondered whether he would go down to the beach for a swim before he left. He has stuck so close to business all summer that perhaps he does not know the ocean is there. There is another thrifty merchant, too, whose strategy comes to our attention. This is the rolling-chair baron, who has closed his little kiosk, but has taken care to paint out the prices per hour of his vehicles, and has not marked any new rates. Cautious man, he is waiting until next summer to see what the trend of prices will be then.

Across the fields toward the inlet, where the grasses have turned rusty bronze and pink, where goldenrod is minting its butter-yellow sprays and riotous magenta portulaccas seed themselves over the sandy patches, the rowboats are being dragged out of the canal and laid up for the winter. The sunburned sailorman who rents them says he has had a good season – and he 'can't complain.' He comes chugging in with his tiny motorboat, towing a string of tender-feet who have been out

tossing on the crabbing grounds for a couple of hours, patiently lowering the fishheads tied on a cord and weighted with rusty bolts. His patient and energetic wife who runs the little candy and sarsaparilla counter on the dock has ended her labours. She is glad to get back to her kitchen: during the long, busy summer days she did her family cooking on an oil stove behind the counter. The captain, as he likes to be called, is about to make his annual change from mariner to roofer, the latter being his winter trade. 'It's blowing up for rain,' he says, looking over his shoulder at the eastern sky. 'I guess the season's pretty near over. I'll get up the rest of them boats next week.'

In September the bathing is at its best. Particularly at sunset, when every one is at supper. To cross those wide fields of wiry grass that stretch down to the sand, is an amazement to the eye. Ahead of you the sea gleams purple as an Easter violet. The fields are a kind of rich palette on which every tint of pink, russet and bronze is laid in glowing variation. The softly wavering breeze, moving among the coarse stalks, gives the view a ripple and shimmer of colour like shot silk. A naturalist could find hundreds of species of flowers and grasses on those sandy meadows. There are great clumps of some bushy herb that has already turned a vivid copper colour, and catches the declining sunlight like burnished metal. There are flecks of yellow, pink and lavender. A cool, strong odour rises from the harsh, knife-edged grasses – a curiously dry, brittle scent, familiar to all who have poked about sand dunes.

The beach itself, coloured in the last flush of the level

sun, is still faintly warm to the naked foot, after the long shining of the day; but it cools rapidly. The tide is coming in, with long, seething ridges of foam, each flake and clot of crumbled water tinged with a rose-petal pink by the red sunset. All this glory of colour, of movement, of unspeakable exhilaration and serenity, is utterly lonely. The long curve of the beach stretches away northward, where a solitary orange-coloured dory is lying on the sand. The air is full of a plaintive piping of sea-birds. A gull flashes along the beach, with a pink glow on its snowy under-plumage.

At that hour the water is likely to be warmer than the air. It may be only the curiously magical effect of the horizontal light, but it seems more foamy, more full of suds, than earlier in the day. Over the green top of the waves, laced and marbled with froth, slides a layer of iridescent bubble-wash that seems quite a different substance from the water itself – like the meringue on top of a lemon pie. One can scoop it up and see it winking in points of sparkling light.

The waves come marching in. It is a calm sea, one would have said looking down from the dunes, but to the swimmer, elbowing his way under their leaning hollows, their stature seems tremendous. The sunlight strikes into the hills of moving water, filling them with a bluish spangle and tremor of brightness. It is worth while to duck underneath and look up at the sun from under the surface, to see how the light seems to spread and clot and split in the water like sour cream poured into a cup of tea. The sun, which is so ruddy in the evening air, is a pale milky white when seen from under water.

A kind of madness of pleasure fills the heart of the solitary sunset swimmer. To splash and riot in that miraculous colour and tumult of breaking water seems an effective answer to all the grievances of earth. To float, feeling the poise and encircling support of those lapsing pillows of liquid, is mirth beyond words. To swim just beyond the line of the big breakers, dropping a foot now and then to feel that bottom is not too far away – to sprawl inward with a swashing comber while the froth boils about his shoulders – to watch the light and colour prismed in the curl and slant of every wave, and the quick vanishing of brightness and glory once the sun is off the sea – all this is the matter of poems that no one can write.

The sun drops over the flat glitter of the inland lagoons; the violet and silver and rose-flushed foam are gone from the ocean; the sand is grey and damp and chilly. Down the line of the shore comes an aeroplane roaring through the upper regions of dazzling sunlight, with brightness on its varnished wings. The lighthouse at the Inlet has begun to twinkle its golden flash, and supper will soon be on the table. The solitary swimmer takes one last regretful plunge through a sluicing hill of green, and hunts out his pipe. He had left it, as the true smoker does, carefully filled, with a match-box beside it, in a dry hollow on the sand. Trailing a thread of blue reek, he plods cheerfully across the fields, taking care not to tread upon the small hoptoads that have come out to hail the evening. Behind him the swelling moon floats like a dim white lantern, pencilling the darkening water with faint scribbles of light.

But there are still a few oldtimers in Fierceforest, cottagers who cling on until the 1st of October, and whose fraternal password (one may hear them saying it every time they meet) is 'Sure! Best time of the year!' Through the pink flush of sunrise you may see the husbands moving soberly toward the early commuters' train, the 6.55, which is no longer crowded. (A month ago one had to reach it half an hour early in order to get a seat in the smoker.) Each one transports his satchel, and also curious bundles, for at this time of year it is the custom to make the husband carry home each week an instalment of the family baggage, to save excess when moving day comes. One totes an oil stove; another, a scales for weighing the baby. They trudge somewhat grimly through the thin morning twilight, going back for another week at office and empty house or apartment. Leaving behind them the warm bed, the little cottage full of life and affection, they taste for a moment the nostalgic pang that sailors know so well when the ship's bow cuts the vacant horizon. Over the purple rim of sea the sun juts its scarlet disk. You may see these solitary husbands halt a moment to scan the beauty of the scene. They stand there thoughtful in the immortal loneliness of dawn. Then they climb the smoker and pinochle has its sway.

PUTTING THE CITY TO BED

It was a delicious cool evening when I strolled abroad to observe the town composing itself for slumber. The caustic Mrs. Trollope, who visited Philadelphia in 1830, complained bitterly that there was no carousal or cheer of any kind proceeding in the highways after sunset: 'The streets are entirely dark, scarcely a step is heard, and for a note of music, or the sound of mirth, I listened in vain.' But the lady would find us much more volatile now.

The Weather Man tries to set us a good example by pulling down the front of his little booth at Ninth and Chestnut soon after ten o'clock, but there are few who take the hint. It was a night almost chilly – 67 degrees – a black velvety sky to the northward, diluted to a deep purple and blue where the moon was shining in the south. At 10.45 letter writing was in full scratch along the counters of the main post office. Every desk was busy; the little stamp windows were lively caves of light. Hotel signs – the old signs that used to say ROOMS $1 UP, and now just say ROOMS – were beaconing along the street. Crowds were piling out of movies. The coloured man who letters cards with delicate twirls of penmanship was setting up his little table on Market Street. In spite of the cool air every soda fountain was lined with the customary sailors. The first morning papers were beginning to be screamed about the streets, with that hoarse urgency of yelling that always makes the simple-minded think that something fearful has happened.

A crowd gathered hastily in front of a big office build-

ing on Chestnut Street. Policemen sprang from nowhere. A Jefferson ambulance clanged up. Great agitation, and prolonged ringing of the bell at the huge iron-grilled front door. What's up? Finally appeared a man with blood spattered over his shirt and was escorted to the ambulance. The engineer had walked too near an electric fan and got his head cut. Lucky he didn't lose it altogether, said one watcher.

Eleven o'clock. In a cigar store served by a smiling damsel, two attractive ladies were asking her if it would be safe for them to visit a Chinese restaurant a little farther up the street. 'We're from out of town,' they explained, 'and all alone. We want some chop suey. Is that the kind of place ladies can go to?' The cigar saleslady appealed to me, and I assured the visitors they would be perfectly serene. Perhaps if I had been more gallant I should have escorted them thither. Off they went, a little timorous.

Eleven-fifteen. The first of the typical nighthawk motors begin to appear: huge runabouts, with very long bonnets and an air of great power. One of them, a vivid scarlet with white wheels, spins briskly round the City Hall. Trills and tinklings of jazz clatter from second-story restaurants. But Chestnut Street is beginning to calm down. Lights in shop windows are going off. The old veteran takes his seat on a campstool near Juniper Street and begins to tingle his little bell merrily. If you drop something in his box, he will tell you the sign of the zodiac under which you were born, prognosticate your lucky days and planetary hours and advise you when to take a journey. He explained to me that

this happened to be the night of Venus. I had been sure of it already after some scrutiny of the pavements. As the lights are dimmed along the street, the large goldfish in a Chestnut Street café window grow more placid and begin to think of a little watery repose.

Half-past eleven. The airy spaces round the City Hall are full of a mellow tissue of light and shadow. The tall lamp standards are like trees of great pale oranges. The white wagons of the birchbeer fleet are on their rounds. The seats where the band concerts are held are deserted save for one meditative vagrant, drooping with unknown woes. Swiftly flowing cars flit mysteriously round the curve and bend into the long expanse of North Broad Street where their little red sternlights twinkle beneath the row of silver arcs stretching away into the distance. Broad Street Station is comparatively quiet, though there is the usual person gazing up at the window lettered SCRIP CLERGY STOPOVERS COMMUTATION. He wonders what it means. I do not know, any more than he. Standing at the corner of the station the lights of the sky are splendid and serene. Over the Finance Building a light wispy plume of steam hovers and detaches itself, gleaming in the moonshine like a floating swan's feather. The light catches the curves of the trolley rails like ribbons of silver.

Midnight. The population seems to have sorted itself into couples. Almost all the ladies in sight wear silk sports skirts, and walk with their escorts in a curiously slow swishing swing. Some of them may have been dancing all evening, and still pace with some of the rhythm of the waxed floor. In darkened banks are little gleams

of orange light behind trellises of bars, where watchmen sit and grind away the long hours. Down the dark narrow channel of Sansom Street it is very silent. The rear of a ten-cent store shows a gush of brightness, where some overhauling of stock is going on. The back door is open, and looking in I can see a riotous mouse darting about under the counters, warily watching the men who are rearranging some display. The Jefferson Hospital is silent, with occasional oblongs of light in windows. I seem to detect a whiff of disinfectants, and wonder how the engineer is getting on.

Market Street is still lively. A dance 'orchard' emits its patrons down a long stair to the street. Down they come, gaily laughing. The male partners are all either sailors, who love dancing even more than ice-cream soda; or youths with tilted straw hats of coarse weave, with legs that bend backward most oddly below the knee, very tightly and briefly trousered. Two doughboys with ace of spades shoulder insignia greet the emerging throng, showing little booklets for sale. They urge the girls to buy, with various arts of cajolery and bright-eyed persuasion. 'Who'll buy a book?' they say, 'forty short stories, put out by a wounded soldier.' The girls all wear very extensive hats, and are notably pretty. 'Which way do we go?' is the first question on reaching the street. It is usually the way to the nearest soda fountain.

Twelve-forty. The watering tank roars down Chestnut Street, shedding a hissing tide from kerb to kerb. The fleet of To Hire night taxis wheel off one by one as fares leap in to escape from the deluge, which can be heard approaching far up the silent street. It is getting

quiet, save in the all-night lunch rooms, where the fresh baking of doughnuts and cinnamon buns is being set out, and the workers of the night shift are streaming in for their varied and substantial meals. They eat leisurely, with loud talk or reading the morning papers.

One-fifteen. The population consists mostly of small groups on corners waiting patiently for cars, which are rare after one o'clock. Chauffeurs sit in twos, gossiping over the fares of the evening. Along the kerb of the Federal Building on Ninth Street linger a few resolute loungers, enjoying the calm of the night. A fruit stall man is wondering whether to trundle home. The pile of fresh doughnuts in the lunch-room is rapidly diminishing. Street cleaning trucks are on their nightly rounds. It's time to go to bed.

THE managing editor, the city editor, the production manager, the foreman of the composing room, and the leading editorial writer having all said to us with a great deal of sternness, 'Your copy for Saturday has got to be upstairs by such and such a time, because we are going to make up the page at so and so a. m.,' we got rather nervous.

If we may say so, we did not like the way they said it. They spoke – and we are thinking particularly of the production manager – with a kind of paternal severity that was deeply distressing to our spirit. They are all, in off hours, men of delightfully easy disposition. They are men with whom it would be a pleasure and a privilege to be cast away on a desert island or in a crowded subway train. It is only just to say that they are men whom we admire greatly. When we meet them in the elevator, or see them at Frank's having lunch, how full of jolly intercourse they are. But in the conduct of their passionate and perilous business, that is, of getting the paper out on time, a holy anguish shines upon their brows. The stern daughter of the voice of God has whispered to them, and they pass on the whisper to us through a megaphone.

That means to say that within the hour we have got to show up something in the neighbourhood of 1100 words to these magistrates and overseers. With these keys – typewriter keys, of course – we have got to unlock our heart. Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour. Speaking of Milton, the damp that fell round

his path (in Wordsworth's sonnet) was nothing to the damp that fell round our alert vestiges as we hastened to the Salamis station in that drench this morning. (We ask you to observe our self-restraint. We might have said 'drenching downpour of silver Long Island rain,' or something of that sort, and thus got several words nearer our necessary total of 1100. But we scorn, even when writing against time, to take petty advantages. Let us be brief, crisp, packed with thought. Let it stand as drench, while you admire our proud conscience.)

Eleven hundred words – what a lot could be said in 1100 words! We stood at the front door of the baggage car (there is an odd irony in this: the leading editorial writer, one of the most implacable of our taskmasters, is spending the summer at Sea Cliff, and he gets the last empty seat left in the smoker. So we, getting on at Salamis, have to stand in the baggage car) watching the engine rock and roar along the rails, while the rain sheeted the level green fields. It is very agreeable to ride on a train in the rain. We have never known just why, but it conduces to thought. The clear trickles of water are drawn slantwise across the window panes, and one watches, absently, the curious behaviour of the drops. They hang bulging and pendulous, in one spot for some seconds. Then, as they swell, suddenly they break loose and zigzag swiftly down the pane, following the slippery pathway that previous drops have made. It is like a little puzzle game where you manœuvre a weighted capsule among pegs toward a narrow opening. 'Pigs in clover,' they sometimes call it, but who knows why? The conduct of raindrops on a smoking-car window is capricious and

odd, but we must pass on. That topic alone would serve for several hundred words, but we will not be opportunist.

We stood at the front door of the baggage car, and in a pleasant haze of the faculties we thought of a number of things. We thought of some books we had seen up on East Fifty-ninth Street, in that admirable row of old book-shops, particularly Mowry Saben's volume of essays, *The Spirit of Life*, which we are going back to buy one of these days; so please let it alone. We then got out a small note-book in which we keep memoranda of books we intend to read and pored over it zealously. Just for fun, we will tell you three of the titles we have noted there:

The Voyage of the Hoppergrass, by E. L. Pearson.
People and Problems, by Fabian Franklin.
Broken Stowage, by David W. Bone.

But most of all we thought, in a vague sentimental way, about that pleasant Long Island country through which the engine was haling and hallooing all those carloads of audacious commuters.

Only the other day we heard a wise man say that he did not care for Long Island, because one has to travel through a number of half-built suburbs before getting into real country. We felt, when he said it, that it would be impossible for us to tell him how much some of those growing suburbs mean to us, for we have lived in them. There is not one of those little frame dwellings that doesn't give us a thrill as we buzz past them. If you voyage from Brooklyn, as we do, you will have noticed two

stations (near Jamaica) called Clarenceville and Morris Park. Now we have never got off at those stations, though we intend to some day. But in those rows of small houses and in sudden glimpses of modest tree-lined streets and corner drug stores we can see something that we are not subtle enough to express. We see it again in the scrap of green park by the station at Queens, and in the brave little public library near the same station – which we cannot see from the train, though we often try to; but we know it is there, and probably the same kindly lady librarian and the children borrowing books. We see it again – or we did the other day – in a field at Mineola where a number of small boys were flying kites in the warm, clean, softly perfumed air of a July afternoon. We see it in the vivid rows of colour in the florist's meadow at Floral Park. We don't know just what it is, but over all that broad tract of hardworking suburbs there is a secret spirit of practical and persevering decency that we somehow associate with the soul of America.

We see it with the eye of a lover, and we know that it is good.

Having got as far as this, we took the trouble to count all the words up to this point. The total is exactly 1100.

THOUGHTS IN THE SUBWAY

I

We hear people complain about the subway: its brutal competitive struggle, its roaring fury and madness. We think they have not sufficiently considered it.

Any experience shared daily and for a long time by a great many people comes to have a communal and social importance; it is desirable to fill it with meaning and see whether there may not be some beauty in it. The task of civilization is not to be always looking wistfully back at a Good Time long ago, or always panting for a doubtful millennium to come; but to see the significance and secret of that which is around us. And so we say, in full seriousness, that for one observer at any rate the subway is a great school of human study. We will not say that it is an easy school: it is no kindergarten; the curriculum is strenuous and wearying, and not always conducive to blithe cheer.

But what a tide of humanity, poured to and fro in great tides over which the units have little control. What a sharp and troubled awareness of our fellow-beings, drawn from study of those thousands of faces – the fresh living beauty of the girls, the faces of men empty of all but suffering and disillusion, a shabby errand boy asleep, goggling with weariness and adenoids – so they go crashing through the dark in a patient fellowship of hope and mysterious endurance. How can one pass through this quotidian immersion in humanity without being, in some small degree, enriched by that admiring pity which is the only emotion that can

permanently endure under the eye of a questioning star?

Why, one wonders, should we cry out at the pangs and scuffles of the subway? Do we expect great things to come to pass without corresponding suffering? Some day a great poet will be born in the subway – spiritually speaking; one great enough to show us the terrific and savage beauty of this multitudinous miracle. As one watches each of those passengers, riding with some inscrutable purpose of his own (or an even more inscrutable lack of purpose) toward duty or liberation, he may be touched with anger and contempt toward individuals; but he must admit the majesty of the spectacle in the mass. One who loves his country for a certain candour and quick vigour of spirit will view the scene again and again in the hope of spying out some secrets of the national mind and destiny. Daily he bathes in America. He has that curious sense of mystical meaning in common things that a traveller feels coming home from abroad, when he finds even the most casual glimpses strangely pregnant with national identity. In the advertisements, despite all their absurdities; in voices humorous or sullen; even in the books that the girls are reading (for most girls read books in the subway) he will try to divine some authentic law of life.

He is but a poor and mean-spirited lover – whether of his city, his country, or anything else – who loves her only because he has known no other. We are shy of vociferating patriotism because it is callow and empty, sprung generally from mere ignorance. The true enthusiast, we would like to think, is he who can travel daily some dozen or score miles in the subway, plunged in the warm wedlock of the rush hours; and can still

gather some queer loyalty to that rough, drastic experience. Other than a sense of pity and affection toward those strangely sculptured faces, all busy upon the fatal tasks of men, it is hard to be precise as to just what he has learned. But as the crowd pours from the cars, and shrugs off the burden of the journey, you may see them looking upward to console themselves with perpendicular loveliness leaping into the clear sky. Ah, they are well trained. All are oppressed and shackled by things greater than themselves; yet within their own orbits of free movement they are masters of the event. They are patient and friendly, and endlessly brave.

II

The train roared through the subway, that warm typhoon whipping light summer dresses in a multitudinous flutter. All down the bright crowded aisle of patient humanity I could see their blowing colours.

My eyes were touched with Truth: I saw them as they are, beautiful and brave.

Is Time never sated with loveliness? How many million such he has devoured, and must he take these, too? They are so young, so slender, so untutored, such unconscious vessels of amazing life; so courageous in their simple finery, so unaware of the Enemy that waits for us all. With what strange cruelties will he trouble them, their very gaiety a temptation to his hand? See them on Broadway at the lunch hour, pouring in their vivacious thousands on to the pavement. Is there no one who wonders about these merry little hostages? Can you look on them without marvelling at their gallant mien?

They are aware of their charms, but unconscious of their loveliness. Surely they are a new generation of their sex, cool, assured, even capable. They are happy, because they do not think too much; they are lovely, because they are so perishable, because (despite their naïve assumption of certainty) one knows them so delightfully only an innocent ornament of this business world of which they are so ignorant. They are the cheerful children of Down Town, and Down Town looks upon them with the affectionate compassion children merit. Their joys, their tragedies, are the emotions of children – all the more terrible for that reason.

And so you see them, day after day, blithely and gallantly faring onward in this Children's Crusade. Can you see that caravan of life without a pang? For many it is tragic to be young and beautiful and a woman. Luckily, they do not know it, and they never will. But in courage, and curiosity, and loveliness, how they put us all to shame. I see them, flashing by in a subway train, golden sphinxes, whose riddles (as Mr. Cabell said of Woman) are not worth solving. Yet they are all the more appealing for that fact. For surely to be a riddle which is not worth solving, and still is cherished as a riddle, is the greatest mystery of all. What strange journeys lie before them, and how triumphantly they walk the precipices as though they were mere meadow paths.

My eyes were touched with Truth, and I saw them as they are, beautiful and brave. And sometimes I think that even Time must be sated with loveliness; that he will not crumble them or mar their gallant childishness; that he will leave them, their bright dresses fluttering, as I have seen them in the subway many a summer day.

GISSING JOINS A COUNTRY CLUB

A NUMBER of our clients have been asking for news of Haphazard Gissing, the Synthetic Dog. Since we have always been so candid with our patrons, we shall have to tell the unvarnished story of the latest surprising chapter in that romantic animal's career.

We say it with reluctance, and we say it with unfeigned sadness: we have had to deport Gissing. Admirable creature though he was, active, agile (you should have seen him play catch with a rubber ball), sonorous at night when he suspected alien footstep, highly intelligent and not devoid of a rude houndish comeliness – with all these gifts, he was not congenial among children. We do not know whether it was due to some dark strain of philosophy in him that rendered him too introspective to understand the ways of juveniles, or whether it was a blend of hot cavalier jealousy – at any rate, he never seemed able to unbend properly among the extremely young. The terror that he inspired in icemen and tinsmiths could be countenanced, but when he bristled and showed his teeth at neighbouring children something had to be done. It was the familiar problem of literature and life: here is an amiable creature, well beloved, possessed (by some kink of breeding) with an unexorcisable deviltry. We can leave it at that, and not harmonize the theme with sentimental arpeggios.

Of course the first thing to be done was to find a good home for the exile. We consulted Dr. Rothaug, the kindly veterinary of Sea Cliff, at whose establishment Gissing took a cultural course last winter. Dr. Rothaug told us of

a farmer in that pretty suburb of Glen Cove which is miscalled *Skunk's Misery*, who was said to be looking for a fierce watch-dog to guard his chickens. Thither we went, and found the farmer milking at a barn on the lonely hillside. But just the night before he had been given a tramp collie. We liked the look of the farm at Skunk's Misery; it was the kind of place where Gissing would have been well content, but the farmer said that one dog was enough. That night, very late, we let Gissing indoors, and shared a Last Supper with him at the icebox. Perhaps we shall remember that he seemed just a little surprised at the beefbone and the arrowroot biscuits spread with Roquefort cheese. Well, we said to ourself defensively, he was always fond of Roquefort; there's only a scrap of it left; and very likely he'll never taste it again.

We refuse to be stampeded into any sentiment about this matter; we always thought that Gissing, as he matured, was developing a touch of the Thomas Hardy fatalism; he would be annoyed if we tried to over-dramatize this incident.

The next day the whole family was mustered to pay parting honours; all hands were embarked in Dame Quickly; the condemned dog ate a hearty breakfast, and with a bight of clothesline about his neck was escorted to the chariot, his long unused hawser having vanished since the Urchin used it to moor a full-rigged ship to a neighbouring sapling. By this time the victim had suspected something amiss; his deeply stricken cider-coloured eye was painfully interrogative. The Dame, however, seemed to us a trifle heartless. Off she went, her cylinders drumming with their usual alacritous smoothness. To a wedding or a funeral,

all one to her. Gissing, now probably reviewing inwardly the tale of his errors (there must have been many of which we are ignorant: but we never did know where he went on those long daily expeditions), was (we are pleased to record it) too honourable to attempt any insincere repentances. He kept climbing into the laps of his guardians, but the ironist insists that this was not all affection, but rather that the vibration of the floorboards tickled his pads. There was an occasional secret caress, both given and taken, but we know our clients are too stiff in the bosom to want to hear about such matters. The younger generation, in the back seat, were eager to see the country club that Gissing was going to join. So had the matter been explained to them.

Across those autumn-tinted fields of central Long Island – all colours of pink and fawn and panther with the weathered shrivelling corn-shocks like old ghost-Indian tepees, and the pumpkins bright in the stubble – we proceeded to the Bide-a-Wee Home, which lies tucked away in the woods near Wantagh. This place had been to us only a name, and indeed we knew not exactly what to expect. Great was our pleasure to find a charming old farmhouse with great barns and outhouses, and an immediate clamour from hundreds of dogs running gaily in fenced enclosures, and lesser dogs, both hale and cripple, about the yard. Gissing hopped out blithely: his tail lifted sharply over his back, feathering downward as it curved: the warm October air, one supposes, came to him sharply barbed with the aromas of innumerable congenials. He was very much alive, and walked nimbly on cushion toes. Holding the rope, we walked among the barns, saluted by

prodigious applause from all sides. Even an enclosure full of cats showed gracious interest. The conclusion drawn by the Younger Generation was that Gissing's friends were glad to see him. Then came a genial curator, Gissing was led to a wire gate, and introduced into an orchard plot among about thirty more or less his own size. There was a good deal of bristling and growling, but he stood his ground calmly while a dozen or so of his new clubmates inquired into his credentials.

We had been somewhat troubled by the signboard of the Bide-a-Wee, which calls itself a *Home for Friendless Animals*. We wished to impress upon the curator that Gissing was far from friendless, but we soon found that the legend on the board was inaccurate. Many very well-loved animals go there, for one reason or another; the organization tries to find a suitable home for all the beasts in its care; the name and characteristics of each are entered in a ledger when it arrives, and, if he so desires, the previous owner is notified when the animal goes to its new home. We were pleased to learn also that much of the broken bread from the Waldorf and Vanderbilt Hotels is shipped out to the Bide-a-Wee; so, if you are lunching there and don't finish your roll, perhaps Gissing will get it. (He is particularly fond of the crescent-shaped ones, with little black specks on them.) The Home is supported by voluntary contribution. In the record book we inscribed Gissing's biography very briefly:

GISSING: *origin doubtful: two years old: has always had a good home. A fine watch-dog, but not good with children.*

We would have liked to go on, for much more might

have been said. We would have liked to tell the friendly curator that this very week (by the quaint irony of circumstance) a book is to be published of which Gissing – somewhat transformed – is the hero. But we thought it best not to mention this, lest it get around among the other members and they taunt Gissing about it. We were happy to leave him in so congenial and friendly a home. And if any of our clients happen to need a good dog for a lonely country place – a dog who is perhaps too intellectual and excitable for children, but a tocsin of excellent acoustic strength – there you'll find him. He has promised to write to the Urchiness, provided she eats her cereal a little faster.

As we left, Gissing was standing on his hind legs looking through the fence. He wailed just a little. It would be less than justice (to both sides) not to admit it. Like Milton's hero leaving the Garden, 'a few natural tears he shed, but dried them soon.' As the friendly curator said, 'By to-morrow he'll think he's lived here all his life.' On the way home, there being more room in the Dame, a supply of cider was laid in for consolation. Last night it seemed just a little strange to visit the icebox all alone. To-morrow, perhaps, we shall take lunch at the Waldorf.

LETTING OUT THE FURNACE

THE prudent commuter (and all commuters are prudent, for the others are soon weeded out by the rigours of that way of life) keeps the furnace going until early May in these latitudes – assuming that there are small children in the house. None of those April hot waves can fool him; he knows that, with cunning management, two or three shovelfuls of coal a day will nurse the fire along, and there it is in case of a sudden chilly squall. But when at last he lets the fire die, and after its six months of constant and honourable service the old boiler grows cold, the kindly glow fades and sinks downward out of sight under a crust of grey clinkers, our friend muses tenderly in his cellar, sitting on a packing-case.

He thinks, first, how odd it is that when he said to himself, 'We might as well let the fire go out,' it kept on sturdily burning, without attention or fuel, for a day and a half; whereas if he had, earlier in the season, neglected it even for a few hours, all would have been cold and silent. He remembers, for instance, the tragic evening with the mercury around zero, when, having (after supper) arranged everything at full blast and all radiators comfortably sizzling, he lay down on his couch to read Leonard Merrick, intending to give all hands a warm house for the night. Very well; but when he woke up around 2 a.m. and heard the tenor winds singing through the woodland, how anxiously he stumbled down the cellar stairs, fearing the worst. His fears were justified. There, on top of the thick bed of silvery ashes, lay the last pallid rose of fire. For as every pyrophil has noted, when the draught is left on,

the fire flees upward, leaving its final glow at the top; but when all draughts are shut off, it sinks downward, shyly hiding in the heart of the mass.

So he stood, still drowsily aghast, while Gissing (the synthetic dog) frolicked merrily about his unresponsive shins, deeming this just one more of those surprising entertainments arranged for his delight.

Now, on such an occasion the experienced commuter makes the best of a bad job, knowing there is little to be gained by trying to cherish and succour a feeble remnant of fire. He will manfully jettison the whole business, filling the cellar with the crash of shunting ashes and the clatter of splitting kindling. But this pitiable creature still thought that mayhap he could, by sedulous care and coaxing, revive the dying spark. With such black arts as were available he wrestled with the despondent glim. During this period of guilty and furtive strife he went quietly upstairs, and a voice spoke up from slumber. 'Isn't the house very cold?' it said.

'Is it?' said this wretched creature, with great simulation of surprise. 'Seems very comfortable to me.'

'Well, I think you'd better send up some more heat,' said this voice, in the tone of one accustomed to command.

'Right away,' said the panic-stricken combustion engineer, and returned to his cellar, wondering whether he was suspected. How is it, he wondered, that ladies know instinctively, even when vested in several layers of blankets, if anything is wrong with the furnace? Another of the mysteries, said he, grimly, to the synthetic dog. By this time he knew full well (it was 3 a.m.) that there was

naught for it but to decant the grateful of cinders and set to work on a new fire.

Such memories throng in the mind of the commuter as he surveys the dark form of his furnace, standing cold and dusty in the warm spring weather, and he cleans and drains it for the summer vacation. He remembers the lusty shout of winter winds, the clean and silver nakedness of January weather, the shining glow of the golden coals, the comfortable rustling and chuckle of the boiler when alive with a strong urgency of steam, the soft thud and click of the pipes when the pressure was rising before breakfast. And he meditates that these matters, though often the cause of grumbles at the time, were a part of that satisfying reality that makes life in the outposts a more honest thing than the artificial convenience of great apartment houses. The commuter, no less than the seaman, has fidelities of his own; and faithful, strict obedience to hard necessary formulæ favours the combined humility and self-respect that makes human virtue. The commuter is often a figure both tragic and absurd; but he has a rubric and discipline of his own. And when you see him grotesquely hurrying for the 5.27 train, his inner impulse may be no less honourable than that of the ship's officer ascending the bridge for his watch under a dark speckle of open sky.

THE RETURN TO TOWN

It was with somewhat a heavy heart that we prepared to leave Salamis for the winter. Yet inscrutable lust of adventure spurred us on; the city, also, is the place for work. In the country one is too comfortable, and there are too many distractions. Either cider, or stars, or the blue sparkle of the furnace fire – all these require frequent attentions. But it was hard to part with Long Island's charms in November, loveliest of months. The copper-coloured woods, the chrysanthemums, the brisk walk to the morning train, the yellow crackle of logs in the chimney, the chill dry whisper of the neighbouring belt of trees heard at midnight from an airy veranda – these are some of the excitements we shall miss. Most of all, perhaps, that stony little unlit lane, traversed in pitch darkness towards supper time, until, coming clear of the trees, you open up the Dipper, sprawled low across the northern sky.

It was hard, too, to leave Salamis just when its winter season of innocent gaieties was commencing. You would hardly believe how much is going on! Did you know that that deathless old railroad station is being (as they say of ships) reconditioned? And there's going to be a drug store in Salamis Heights. The new Methodist church is nearly finished – and, most glamourous of all, we now have an actual tea-room at the entrance to the Salamis Estates. When you are motoring out that way you can see if we don't speak the truth. In another five years, most likely, we shall have street lights along our lonely wood road to Green Escape – and pavements – and gas to cook with.

But there never will be quite as many fairies in the woods as there have been these past three years.

But, perhaps fortunately, the day set for moving into town was wet and drizzly. And the labour of piling into Dame Quickly various baggages, hampers, toys, a go-cart, and the component railings, girders, rods, springs and mattresses of two cribs was lively enough to oust from the mind any pangs of mere sentiment. The mind of one who has accomplished that task, in shirt-sleeves under a dripping weather, is heated enough to make him ready for any sort of adventurous foray. The Dame, also, grossly overloaded, and travelling smartly on greasy ways, was skiddish. As is ever our fortune, we found the road through Astoria torn up for repairs. This involved a circuit along a most horrible bypath, where our ill-adjusted freight leaped crazily with every lurch, go-cart and mattresses descended on our neck, and the violence of the bumping caused the crib-girders to burst through the rear of the Dame's canopy. Also we incurred, and probably deserved, a stern rebuke from a gigantic policeman on Second Avenue. To tell the truth, in a downshoot of rain and peering desperately through a streaming windshield, we did not know he was a policeman at first. We thought he was an L pillar.

Yet, when both voyages were safely accomplished – one for the baggage, and one for the household: it would be harder to say which lading was the tighter squeeze – what an exhilaration to move once more in the city of our adoring. It is true that we began by making an immediate enemy in the apartment house, for, as we were quite innocently taking a trunk upstairs in the elevator, assisted by

the cheerful elderly attendant, a lady living in the same house entered by chance and burst into violent reproach because *her* baggage had had to go aloft in the freight elevator. She accused the attendant of favouritism; to which he, quite placidly, explained that this particular baggage had been delivered at the front door in a private car. This compliment to the Dame pleased us, but knowing nothing of the rules, and being wet and pensive, we pretended to be an expressman and said naught. The only other shock was when we took the Dame to a neighbouring garage to recuperate for a few days. (We were glad, then, it had been raining, for the well-loved vehicle looked very sleek and shiny, and it was too dark for the garage man to notice the holes in her top. We wouldn't want him to sneer at her, and his garage, we observed, was full of very handsome cars.) When he said it would cost the Dame $1.50 a night to live there we were a little horrified. That, we reflected, was what we used to pay ourself at the old Continental Hotel in Philly, the inn where the Prince of Wales (the old one) and Dickens and Lincoln and others stayed. We now look with greater and greater astonishment at all the cars we see in New York. How can anyone afford to keep them?

We were dispatched to do some hasty marketing, in time for supper. We made off to our favourite shopping street – Amsterdam Avenue. Delightedly we gazed into those alluring windows. In a dairy, a young lady of dark and appealing loveliness made us welcome. When we ordered milk and laid in a stock of groceries, making it plain to her (by consulting a list) that we were speaking on behalf of the head of the house, she urged us to advise Titania to

open an account. Money she seemed loath to accept: it could all be paid for at the end of the month, she said. It is well to shop referring perplexedly to a little list. This proves that you are an humble, honest paterfamilias, acting only under orders. To such credit is always lavish, and fair milkmaids generously tender.

Various tradesmen in that neighbourhood were surprised, in the tail end of a wet and depressing day, by unexpected increments of traffic. 'Just nick the bone?' inquired the butcher, when, from our list, we read him the item about rib lamb chops. 'Yes, just nick the bone,' we assented, not being very definite on the subject. We were interested in admiring the thick sawdust on the floor, very pleasant to slide the foot upon. The laundryman was just closing when we arrived with our bundle. 'Here's a new customer for you,' we announced. Whatever private sorrows he has were erased from his manly forehead. He told us that he also does tailoring. Cleaning and pressing, he insisted. We had a private feeling, a little shameful, that he hasn't got as good a customer as he imagines. Next door to the tailor, by the way, and right opposite the apartment house, is a carpenter who advertises his skill at bookshelves.

How different it is from Salamis nights. Hanging out of the kitchen window (having gone to the rear of the apartment to see what the icebox is like: it's a beauty) – instead of Orion's Belt and the dry rustle of the trees, we see those steep walls of lighted windows, discreetly blinded, hear sudden shrills of music from above and below. Just through the wall, as we lie abed, we can hear the queer droning whine of the elevator; through the open window, the clang of trolleys on Broadway. Hunting through the

books that belong in the furnished apartment, after startling ourself by reading Mr. D. H. Lawrence's poems called *Look! We Have Come Through!* we found an old Conan Doyle – always our favourite bedtime author. *The Adventures of Gerard*, indeed, and we are going to have a go at it immediately.

Yes, it's very different from Salamis; but Adventure is everywhere, and we like to take things as we find them. We have never been anywhere yet, whether in the steerage of the *Mauretania* or in a private lunch-room at the Bankers' Club, where there wasn't more amusement than we deserved.

ON FILLING AN INK-WELL

THOSE who buy their ink in little stone jugs may prefer to do so because the pottle reminds them of cruiskeen lawn or ginger beer (with its wire-bound cork), but they miss a noble delight. Ink should be bought in the tall, blue glass, quart bottle (with the ingenious non-drip spout), and once every three weeks or so, when you fill your ink-well, it is your privilege to elevate the flask against the brightness of a window, and meditate (with a breath of sadness) on the joys and problems that sacred fluid holds in solution.

How blue it shines toward the light! Blue as lupin or larkspur, or cornflower – aye, and even so blue art thou, my scriven, to think how far the written page falls short of the bright ecstasy of thy dream! In the bottle, what magnificence of unpenned stuff lies cool and liquid: what fluency of essay, what fonts of song. As the bottle glints, blue as a squill or a hyacinth, blue as the meadows of Elysium or the eyes of girls loved by young poets, meseems the racing pen might almost gain upon the thoughts that are turning the bend in the road. A jolly throng, those thoughts: I can see them talking and laughing together. But when pen reaches the road's turning, the thoughts are gone far ahead: their delicate figures are silhouettes against the sky.

It is a sacramental matter, this filling the ink-well. Is there a writer, however humble, who has not poured into his writing pot, with the ink, some wistful hopes or prayers for what may emerge from that dark source? Is there not some particular reverence due the ink-well, some form of propitiation to humbug the powers of evil and constraint

that devil the journalist? Satan hovers near the ink-pot. Luther solved the matter by throwing the well itself at the apparition. That savours to me too much of homœopathy. If Satan ever puts his face over my desk, I shall hurl a volume of Harold Bell Wright at him.

But what becomes of the ink-pots of glory? The conduit from which Boswell drew, for Charles Dilly in The Poultry, the great river of his Johnson? The well (was it of blue china?) whence flowed *Dream Children: a Revery*? (It was written on folio ledger sheets from the East India House – I saw the manuscript only yesterday in a room at Daylesford, Pennsylvania, where much of the richest ink of the last two centuries is lovingly laid away.) The pot of chuckling fluid where Harry Fielding dipped his pen to tell the history of a certain foundling; the ink-wells of the Café de la Source on the Boul' Mich' – do they by any chance remember which it was that R. L. S. used? One of the happiest tremors of my life was when I went to that café and called for a bock and writing material, just because R. L. S. had once written letters there. And the ink-well Poe used at that boarding-house in Greenwich Street, New York (April, 1844), when he wrote to his dear Muddy (his mother-in-law) to describe how he and Virginia had reached a haven of square meals. That hopeful letter, so perfect now in pathos –

For breakfast we had excellent-flavoured coffee, hot and strong – not very clear and no great deal of cream – veal cutlets, elegant ham and eggs and nice bread and butter. I never sat down to a more plentiful or a nicer breakfast. I wish you could have seen the eggs – and the great dishes

of meat. Sis [his wife] is delighted, and we are both in excellent spirits. She has coughed hardly any and had no night sweat. She is now busy mending my pants, which I tore against a nail. I went out last night and bought a skein of silk, a skein of thread, two buttons, a pair of slippers, and a tin pan for the stove. The fire kept in all night. We have now got four dollars and a half left. To-morrow I am going to try and borrow three dollars, so that I may have a fortnight to go upon. I feel in excellent spirits, and haven't drank a drop – so that I hope soon to get out of trouble.

Yes, let us clear the typewriter off the table: an ink-well is a sacred thing.

Do you ever stop to think, when you see the grimy spattered desks of a public post office, how many eager or puzzled human hearts have tried, in those dingy little ink-cups, to set themselves right with fortune? What blissful meetings have been appointed, what scribblings of pain and sorrow, out of those founts of common speech. And the ink-wells on hotel counters – does not the public dipping-place of the Bellevue Hotel, Boston, win a new dignity in my memory when I know (as I learned lately) that Rupert Brooke registered there in the spring of 1914? I remember, too, a certain pleasant vibration when, signing my name one day in the Bellevue's book, I found Miss Agnes Repplier's autograph a little above on the same page.

Among our younger friends, Vachel Lindsay comes to mind as one who has done honour to the ink-well. His *Apology for the Bottle Volcanic* is in his best flow of secret smiling (save an unfortunate dilution of Riley):

Sometimes I dip my pen and find the bottle full of fire,
The salamanders flying forth I cannot but admire. . . .
O sad deceiving ink, as bad as liquor in its way –
All demons of a bottle size have pranced from you to-day,
And seized my pen for hobby-horse as witches ride a broom,
And left a trail of brimstone words and blots and gobs of gloom.
And yet when I am extra good . . . [*here I omit the transfusion of Riley*]
My bottle spreads a rainbow mist, and from the vapour fine
Ten thousand troops from fairyland come riding in a line.

I suppose it is the mark of a trifling mind, yet I like to hear of the little particulars that surrounded those whose pens struck sparks. It is Boswell that leads us into the habit of thought. I like to know what the author wore, how he sat, what the furniture of his desk and chamber, who cooked his meals for him, and with what appetite he approached them. 'The mind soars by an effort to the grand and lofty' (so dipped Hazlitt in some favoured ink-bottle) – 'it is at home in the grovelling, the disagreeable, and the little.'

I like to think, as I look along bookshelves, that every one of these favourites was born out of an ink-well. I imagine the hopes and visions that thronged the author's mind as he filled his pot and sliced the quill. What various fruits have flowed from those ink-wells of the past: for some, comfort and honour, quiet homes and plenteousness; for others, bitterness and disappointment. I have seen a

copy of Poe's poems, published in 1845 by Putnam, inscribed by the author. The volume had been bought for $2,500. Think what that would have meant to Poe himself.

Some such thoughts as these twinkled in my head as I held up the Pierian bottle against the light, admired the deep blue of it, and filled my ink-well. And then I took up my pen which wrote:

A GRACE BEFORE WRITING

This is a sacrament, I think!
  Holding the bottle toward the light,
As blue as lupin gleams the ink:
  May Truth be with me as I write.

That small dark cistern may afford
  Reunion with some vanished friend, –
And with this ink I have just poured
  May none but honest words be penned!

THE UNIVERSITY AND THE URCHIN

SUNDAY afternoon is by old tradition dedicated to the taking of Urchins out to taste the air, and indeed there is no more agreeable pastime. And so, as the Urchin sat in his high chair and thoughtfully shovelled his spoon through meat chopped remarkably small and potatoes mashed in that curious fashion that produces a mass of soft, curly tendrils, his curators discussed the question of where he should be taken.

It was the first Sunday in March – mild and soft and tinctured with spring. 'There's the botanic garden at the University,' I suggested. The Urchin settled it by rattling his spoon on the plate and sliding several inches of potato into his lap. 'Go see garden!' he cried. With the generous tastes of twenty-seven months he cares very little where he is taken; he can find fascination in anything; but something about the word 'garden' seemed to allure him. So a little later when he had been duly habited in brown leggings, his minute brown overcoat, and white hat with ribbons behind it, he and his curators set out. The Urchin was in excellent spirits, for he had been promised a ride on a trolly car – a glorious adventure. In one pocket he carried his private collection of talismans, including a horse-chestnut and a picture of a mouse. Also, against emergencies, a miniature handkerchief with a teddy bear embroidered in one corner, and a safety-pin. The expedition may be deemed to have been a success, as none of these properties were called upon or even remembered.

The car we boarded did not take us just where we expected to go, but that made little difference to the Urchin, who

gazed steadfastly out of the window at a panorama of shabby streets, and offered no comment except one of extreme exultation when we passed a large poster of a cow. Admirably docile, he felt confident that the unusual conjunction of both arbiters of destiny and an impressive trolly car would in the end produce something extremely worth while. We sped across Gray's Ferry bridge – it seemed strange to think that region was once so quiet, green, and rustic – transferred to another car on Woodland Avenue, past the white medley of tombstones in Woodland Cemetery, and got off at the entrance to the dormitory quadrangles at Thirty-seventh Street. We entered through the archway – the Urchin's first introduction to an academic atmosphere. 'This is the University,' I said to him severely, and he was much impressed. As is his way, he conducted himself with extreme sobriety until he should get the hang of this new experience and see what it was all about. I knew from the serene gold sparkle of his brown eyes that there was plenty of larking spirit in him, waiting until he knew whether it was safe to give it play. He held my hand punctiliously while waiting to see what manner of place this University was.

A college quadrangle on a Sunday afternoon has a feeling all its own. Thin tinklings of mandolins eddy from open windows, in which young men may be seen propped up against bright-coloured cushions, always smoking, and sometimes reading with an apparent zeal which might deceive a few onlookers. But the slightest sound of footfalls on the pavement outside their rooms causes these heads to turn and scan the passers. There is always a vague hope in these youthful breasts that some damsel of notable

fairness may have strayed within the bastions. Groups of ladies of youth and beauty do often walk demurely through the courts, and may be sure of hearing admiring whistles shrilled through the sunny air. When a lady walks through a college quadrangle and hears no sibilation, let her know sadly that first youth is past. Even the sedate guardianship of Scribe and Urchin did not forfeit one Lady of Destiny her proper homage of tuneful testimonial. So be it ever!

One who inhabited college quadrangles not so immeasurably long ago, and remembers with secret pain how massively old, experienced, and worldly wise he then thought himself, can never resist a throb of amazement at the entertaining youthfulness of these young monks. How quaintly juvenile they are, and how oddly that assumption of grave superiority sits upon their golden brows! With what an inimitable air of wisdom, cynicism, ancientry, learned aloofness and desire to be observed do they stroll to and fro across the quads, so keenly aware in their inmost bosoms of the presence of visitors and determined to grant an appearance of mingled wisdom, great age, and sad doggishness! What a devil-may-care swing to the stride, what a nonchalance in the perpetual wreath of cigarette smoke, what a carefully assumed bearing of one carrying great wisdom lightly and easily casting it aside for the moment in the pursuit of some waggish trifle. 'Here,' those very self-conscious young visages seem to betray, 'is one who might tell you all about the Holy Roman Empire, and yet is, for the moment, diverting himself with a mere mandolin.' And yet, as the Lady of Destiny shrewdly observed, it is a pity they should mar their beautiful quadrangles with orange peel and scraps of paper.

We walked for some time through those stately courts of Tudor brick and then passed down the little inclined path to the botanic garden, where irises and fresh green spikes are already pushing up through the damp earth. A pale mellow sunlight lay upon the gravel walks, and the Urchin resumed his customary zeal. He ran here and there along the byways, examined the rock borders with an air of scientific questioning, and watched the other children playing by the muddy pond. We found shrubbery swelling with buds, also flappers walking hatless and blanched with talcum, accompanied by Urchins of a larger growth. Both these phenomena we took to be a sign of the coming equinox.

Returning to the dormitory quadrangles, we sat down on a wooden bench to rest, while the Urchin, now convinced that a university is nothing to be awed by, scampered about on the turf. His eye was a bright jewel of roguishness, for he thought that in trotting about the grass he was doing something supremely wicked. He has been carefully trained not to err on the grass of the city square to which he is best accustomed, so this surprising and unchecked revelry quite went to his head. Across and about those wide plots of sodden turf he trotted and chuckled, a small, quaint mortal with his hat ribbons fluttering. Cheering whistles hailed him from open windows above, and he smiled to himself with grave dignity. Apparently, like a distinguished statesman, he regarded these tributes not as meant for himself, but for the great body of childhood he innocently represents, and indeed from which his applauders are not so inextricably severed. With the placid and unconscious happiness of a puppy he careered and meandered,

without motive or method. Perhaps his underlying thought of a university, if he has any, is that it is a place where no one says 'Keep Off the Grass,' and, intellectually speaking, that would not be such a bad motto for an institution of learning.

I don't know whether Doctor Tait McKenzie so intended it, but his appealing and beautiful statue of Young Franklin in front of the University gymnasium is admirably devised for the delight of small Urchins. While the curators take pleasure in the bronze itself, the Urchin may clamber on the different levels of the base, which is nicely adapted for the mountaineering capacity of twenty-seven months. The low brick walls before the gymnasium and the University museum are also just right for an Urchin who has recently learned the fascination of walking on something raised above the ground, provided there is a curator near by to hold his hand. And then, as one walks away toward the South Street bridge an observant Urchin may spy the delightful spectacle of a freight train travelling apparently in mid-air. Some day, one hopes, all that fine tract of open space leading from the museum down to the railroad tracks may perhaps be beautified as a park or an addition to the University's quadrangle system. I don't know who owns it, but its architectural possibilities must surely make the city-planner's mouth water.

By this time the Urchin was beginning to feel a bit weary, and was glad of a lift on a parental shoulder. Then a Lombard Street car came along and took us up half-way across the bridge. So ended the Urchin's first introduction to a university education.

SURF FISHING

All day long you see them stand thigh-deep in the surf fishing. Up on the beach each one has a large basket containing clams for bait, extra hooks and leaders, a little can of oil for the reel, and any particular doo-dads dear to the heart of the individual fisherman. And an old newspaper, all ready to protect the anticipated catch from the rays of the sun.

Some of them wear bathing suits; others rubber hip-boots, or simply old clothes that won't mind getting wet. If they are very full of swank they will have a leather belt with a socket to hold the butt of the rod. Every now and then you will see them pacing backward up the beach, reeling in the line. They will mutter something about a big strike that time, and he got away with the bait. With zealous care they spear some more clam on the hook, twisting it over and over the barb so as to be firmly impaled. Then, with careful precision, they fling the line with its heavy pyramid sinker far out beyond the line of breakers.

There they stand. What do they think about, one wonders? But what does anyone think about when fishing? That is one of the happy pastimes that don't require much thinking. The long ridges of surf crumble about their knees and the sun and keen vital air lull them into a cheerful drowse of the faculties. Do they speculate on the never-ending fascination of the leaning walls of water, the rhythmical melody of the rasp and hiss of the water? Do they watch that indescribable beauty of the breaking wave, a sight as old as humankind and yet never so described that one who has not seen it could picture it?

The wave gathers height and speed as it moves toward the sand. It seems to pull itself together for the last plunge. The first wave that ever rolled up to a beach probably didn't break. It just slid. It was only the second wave that broke – curled over in that curious way. For our theory – which may be entirely wrong – is that the breaking is due to the undertow of previous waves. After a wave sprawls up on the beach, it runs swiftly back. This receding undercurrent – you can feel it very strongly if you are swimming just in front of a large wave about to break – digs in beneath the advancing hill of water. It cuts away the foundations of that hill, which naturally topples over at the crest.

The wave of water leans and hangs for a delaying instant. The actual cascade may begin at one end and run along the length of the ridge; it may begin at both ends and twirl inward, meeting in the middle; it may (but very rarely) begin in the middle and work outward. As the billow is at its height, before it combs over, the fisherman sees the sunlight gleaming through it – an ecstasy of perfect lucid green, with the glimmer of yellow sand behind. Then, for a brief moment – so brief that the details can never be memorized – he sees a clear crystal screen of water falling forward. Another instant, and it is all a boil of snowy suds seething about his legs. He may watch it a thousand times, a million times; it will never be old, never wholly familiar. Colour varies from hour to hour, from day to day. Sometimes blue or violet, sometimes green-olive or grey. The backwash tugs at his boots, hollowing out little channels under his feet. The sun wraps him round like a mantle; the salt crusts and thickens in his hair. And then, when he

has forgotten everything save the rhythm of the falling waves, there comes a sudden tug –

He reels in, and a few curious bathers stand still in the surf to see what he has got. They are inclined to be scornful. It is such a little fish! One would think that such a vast body of water would be ashamed to yield only so small a prize. Never mind. He has compensations they wot not of. Moreover – although he would hardly admit it himself – the fishing business is only a pretext. How else could a grown man with grizzled hair have an excuse to stand all day paddling in the surf?

THE APPLE THAT NO ONE ATE

THE other evening we went to dinner with a gentleman whom it pleases our fancy to call the Caliph.

Now a Caliph, according to our notion, is a Haroun-al-Raschid kind of person; one who governs a large empire of hearts with a genial and whimsical sway; circulating secretly among his fellow-men, doing kindnesses often not even suspected by their beneficiaries. He is the sort of person of whom the trained observer may think, when he hears an unexpected kindness-grenade exploding somewhere down the line, 'I'll bet that came from the Caliph's dugout!' A Caliph's heart is not surrounded by barbed wire entanglements or a strip of No Man's Land. Also, and rightly, he is stern to malefactors and fakers of all sorts.

It would have been sad if anyone so un-Caliphlike as William Hohenzollern had got his eisenbahn through to Bagdad, the city sacred to the memory of a genial despot who spent his cabarabian nights in an excellent fashion. That, however, has nothing to do with the story.

Mr. and Mrs. Caliph are people so delightful that they leave in one's mind a warm afterglow of benevolent sociability. They have an infinite interest and curiosity in the hubbub of human moods and crotchets that surrounds us all. And when one leaves their doorsill one has a genial momentum of the spirit that carries one on rapidly and cheerfully. One has an irresistible impulse to give something away, to stroke the noses of horses, to write a kind letter to the fuel administrator, or do almost anything gentle

and gratuitous. The Caliphs of the world don't know it, but that is the effect they produce on their subjects.

As we left, Mr. and Mrs. Caliph pressed upon us an apple. One of those gorgeous apples that seem to grow wrapped up in tissue paper, and are displayed behind plate-glass windows. A huge apple, tinted with gold and crimson and pale yellow shading off to pink. The kind of apple whose colours are overlaid with a curious mist until you polish it on your coat, when it gleams like a decanter of claret. An apple so large and weighty that if it had dropped on Sir Isaac Newton it would have fractured his skull. The kind of apple that would have made the garden of Eden safe for democracy, because it is so beautiful no one would have thought of eating it.

That was the kind of apple the Caliph gave us.

It was a cold night, and we walked down Chestnut Street dangling that apple, rubbing it on our sleeve, throwing it up and down and catching it again. We stopped at a cigar store to buy some pipe tobacco. Still running on Caliph, by which we mean still beguiled by his geniality, we fell into talk with the tobacconist. 'That's a fine apple you have there,' said he. For an instant we thought of giving it to him, but then we reflected that a man whose days are spent surrounded by rich cigars and smokables is dangerously felicitous already, and a sudden joy might blast his blood vessels.

The shining of the street lamps was reflected on the polished skin of our fruit as we went our way. As we held it in our arms it glowed like a huge ruby. We passed a blind man selling pencils, and thought of giving it to him. Then we reflected that a blind man would lose half the

pleasure of the adventure because he couldn't see the colours. We bought a pencil instead. Still running on Caliph, you see.

In our excitement we did what we always do in moments of stress – went into a restaurant and ordered a piece of hot mince pie. Then we remembered that we had just dined. Never mind, we sat there and contemplated the apple as it lay ruddily on the white porcelain table-top. Should we give it to the waitress? No, because apples were a commonplace to her. The window of the restaurant held a great pyramid of beauties. To her, an apple was merely something to be eaten, instead of the symbol of a grand escapade. Instead, we gave her a little medallion of a buffalo that happened to be in our pocket.

Already the best possible destination for that apple had come to our mind. Hastening zealously up a long flight of stairs in a certain large building we went to a corner where sits a friend of ours, a night watchman. Under a drop light he sits through long and tedious hours, beguiling his vigil with a book. He is a great reader. He eats books alive. Lately he has become much absorbed in Saint Francis of Assisi, and was deep in the *Little Flowers* when we found him.

'We've brought you something,' we said, and held the apple where the electric light brought out all its brilliance.

He was delighted and his gentle elderly face shone with awe at the amazing vividness of the fruit.

'I tell you what I'll do,' he said. 'That apple's much too fine for me. I'll take it home to the wife.'

Of course his wife will say the same thing. She will

be embarrassed by the surpassing splendour of that apple and will give it to some friend of hers whom she thinks more worthy than herself. And that friend will give it to some one else, and so it will go rolling on down the ages, passing from hand to hand, conferring delight, and never getting eaten. Ultimately some one, trying to think of a recipient really worthy of its deliciousness, with give it to Mr. and Mrs. Caliph. And they, blessed innocents, will innocently exclaim, 'Why we never saw such a magnificent apple in all our lives.'

And it will be true, for by that time the apple will gleam with an unearthly brightness, enchanced and burnished by all the kind thoughts that had surrounded it for so long.

As we walked homeward under a frosty sparkle of sky we mused upon all the different kinds of apples we have encountered. There are big glossy green apples and bright red apples and yellow apples, and also that particularly delicious kind (whose name we forget) that is the palest possible cream colour – almost white. We have seen apples of strange shapes, something like a pear (sheepnoses, they call them), and the Maiden Blush apples with their delicate shading of yellow and débutante pink. And what a poetry in the names – Winesap, Pippin, Northern Spy, Baldwin, Ben Davis, York Imperial, Wolf River, Jonathan, Smokehouse, Summer Rambo, Rome Beauty, Golden Grimes, Shenango Strawberry, Benoni!

We suppose there is hardly a man who has not an apple orchard tucked away in his heart somewhere. There must be some deep reason for the old suspicion

that the Garden of Eden was an apple orchard. Why is it that a man can sleep and smoke better under an apple tree than in any other kind of shade? Sir Isaac Newton was a wise man, and he chose an apple tree to sit beneath. (We have often wondered, by the way, how it is that no one has ever named an apple the Woolsthorpe after Newton's home in Lincolnshire, where the famous apple incident occurred.)

An apple orchard, if it is to fill the heart of man to the full with affectionate satisfaction, should straggle down a hillside toward a lake and a white road where the sun shines hotly. Some of its branches should trail over an old, lichened and weather-stained stone wall, dropping their fruit into the highway for thirsty pedestrians. There should be a little path running athwart it, down toward the lake and the old flat-bottomed boat, whose bilge is scattered with the black and shrivelled remains of angleworms used for bait. In warm August afternoons the sweet savour of ripening drifts warmly on the air, and there rises the drowsy hum of wasps exploring the windfalls that are already rotting on the grass. There you may lie watching the sky through the chinks of the leaves, and imagining the cool, golden tang of this autumn's cider vats.

You see what it is to have Caliphs in the world.

She is the only city whose lovers live always in a mood of wonder and expectancy. There are others where one may sink peacefully, contentedly into the life of the town, affectionate and understanding of its ways. But she, the woman city, who is bold enough to say he understands her? The secret of her thrilling and inscrutable appeal has never been told. How could it be? She has always been so much greater than any one who has lived with her. (Shall we mention Walt Whitman as the only possible exception? O. Henry came very near to her, but did he not melodramatize her a little, sometimes cheapen her by his epigrammatic appraisal, fit her too neatly into his plot? Kipling seemed to see her only as the brutal, heedless wanton.) Truly the magic of her spell can never be exacted. She changes too rapidly, day by day. Realism, as they call it, can never catch the boundaries of her pearly beauty. She needs a mystic.

No city so challenges and debilitates the imagination. Here, where wonder is a daily companion, desire to tell her our ecstasy becomes at last only a faint pain in the mind. If you would mute a poet's lyre, put him on a ferry from Jersey City some silver April morning; or send him aboard at Liberty Street in an October dusk. Poor soul, his mind will buzz (for years to come) after adequate speech to tell those cliffs and scarps, amethyst and lilac in the mingled light; the clear topaz chequer of window panes; the dull bluish olive of the river, streaked and crinkled with the churn of the screw! Many a poet

has come to her in the wooing passion. Give him six months, he is merely her Platonist. He lives content with placid companionship. Where are his adjectives, his verbs? That inward knot of amazement, what speech can unravel it?

Her air, when it is typical, is light, dry, cool. It is pale, it is faintly tinctured with pearl and opal. Heaven is unbelievably remote; the city itself daring so high, Heaven lifts in a cautious remove. Light and shadow are fantastically banded, striped, and patch-worked among her cavern streets; a cool, deep gloom is cut across with fierce jags and blinks of brightness. She smiles upon man who takes his ease in her colossal companionship. Her clean soaring perpendiculars call the eye upward. One wanders as a botanist in a tropical forest. That great smooth groinery of the Pennsylvania Station train shed: is it not the arching fronds of iron palm trees? Oh, to be a botanist of this vivid jungle, spread all about one, anatomist of the ribs and veins that run from the great backbone of Broadway!

To love her, one thinks, is to love one's fellows; each of them having some unknown share in her loveliness. Any one of her streets would be the study and delight of a lifetime. To speak at random, we think of that little world of brightness and sound bourgeois cheer that spreads around the homely Verdi statue at Seventy-third Street. We have a faithful affection for that neighbourhood, for reasons of our own. Within a radius, thereabouts, of a quarter-mile each way, we could live a year and learn new matters every day. They call us a hustling folk. Observe the tranquil afternoon light in

those brownstone byways. Pass along leisurely Amsterdam Avenue, the region of small and genial shops: Amsterdam Avenue of the many laundries. See the children trooping upstairs to their own room at the St. Agnes' branch of the Public Library. See the taxi drivers, sitting in their cars alongside the Verdi grass plot (a rural breath of new-mown turf sweetening the warm, crisp air) and smoking pipes. Every one of them is to us as fascinating as a detective story. What a hand they have had in ten thousand romances. At this very moment, what quaint and many stranded destinies may hail them and drive off? But there they sit, placid enough, with a pipe and the afternoon paper. The light, fluttering dresses of enigmatic fair ones pass gaily on the pavement. Traffic flows, divides, and flows on, a sparkling river. Here is that mystery, a human being, buying a cigar. Here is another mystery asking for a glass of frosted chocolate. Why is it that we cannot accost that tempting riddle and ask him to give us an accurate précis of his life to date? And that red-haired burly sage, he who used to bake the bran muffins in the little lunch-room near by, and who lent us his Robby Burns one night – what has become of him?

So she teases us, so she allures. Sometimes, on the L, as one passes along that winding channel where the walls and windows come so close, there is a felicitous sense of being immersed, surrounded, drowned in a great, generous ocean of humanity. It is a fine feeling. All life presses around one, the throb and the problem are close, are close. Who could be weary, who could be at odds with life, in such an embrace of destiny? The great

tall sides of buildings fly open, the human hive is there, beautiful and arduous beyond belief. Here is our worship and here our lasting joy, here is our immortality of encouragement. Yes, perhaps O. Henry did say the secret after all: 'He saw no longer a rabble, but his brothers seeking the ideal.'

The mind trudges patiently behind the senses. Day by day a thousand oddities and charms outline themselves tenderly upon consciousness, but it may be long before understanding comes with brush and colour to fill in the tracery. One learns nothing until he rediscovers it for himself. Every now and then, in reading, I have come across something which has given me the wild surmise of pioneering mingled with the faint magic of familiarity – for instance, some of the famous dicta of Wordsworth and Coleridge and Shelley about poetry. I realized, then, that a teacher had told me these things in my freshman year at college – fifteen years ago. I jotted them down at that time, but they were mere catchwords. It had taken me fifteen years of vigorous living to overhaul those catchwords and fill them with a meaning of my own. The two teachers who first gave me some suspicion of what lies in the kingdom of poetry – who gave 'so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it' – are both dead. May I mention their names? – Francis B. Gummere and Albert Elmer Hancock, both of Haverford College. I cannot thank them as, now, I would like to. For I am (I think) approaching a stage where I can somewhat understand and relish the things of which they spoke. And I wonder afresh at the patience and charity of those who go on lecturing, unabated in zest, to boys of whom one in ten may perhaps, fifteen years later, begin to grasp their message.

In so far as any formal or systematic discipline of thought was concerned, I think I may say my education was a

complete failure. For this I had only my own smattering and desultory habit of mind to blame, and also a vivid troublesome sense of the beauty of it all. The charm of the prismatic fringe round the edges made juggling with the lens too tempting, and a clear persistent focus was never attained. Considered (oddly enough) by my mates as the pattern of a diligent scholar, I was in reality as idle as the idlest of them, which is saying much; though I confess that my dilettantism was not wholly disreputable. My mind excellently exhibited the Heraclitean doctrine: a constant flux of information passed through it, but nothing remained. Indeed, my senses were so continually crammed with new enchanting impressions, and every field of knowledge seemed so alluring, it was not strange I made little progress in any.

Perhaps it was unfortunate that both in America and in England I found myself in a college atmosphere of extraordinary pictorial charm. The Arcadian loveliness of the Haverford campus and the comfortable simplicity of its routine; and then the hypnotizing beauty and curiosity and subtle flavour of Oxford life (with its long, footloose, rambling vacations) – these were aptly devised for the exercise of the imagination, which is often a gracious phrase for loafing. But these surroundings were too richly entertaining, and I was too green and soft and humorous (in the Shakespearean sense) to permit any rational continuous plan of study. Like the young man to whom Coleridge addressed a poem of rebuke, I was abandoned, a greater part of the time, to 'an Indolent and Causeless Melancholy'; or to its partner, an excessive

and not always tasteful mirth. I spent hours upon hours, with little profit, in libraries, flitting aimlessly from book to book. With something between terror and hunger I contemplated the opposite sex. In short, I was discreditable and harmless and unlovely as the young Yahoo can be. It fills me with amazement to think that my preceptors must have seen, in that ill-conditioned creature, some shadow of human semblance, or how could they have been so uniformly kind?

Our education – such of it as is of durable importance – comes haphazard. It is tinged by the enthusiasms of our teachers, gleamed by suggestions from our friends, prompted by glimpses and footnotes and margins. There was a time, I think, when I hung in tender equilibrium among various possibilities. I was enamoured of mathematics and physics: I went far enough in the latter to be appointed undergraduate assistant in the college laboratory. I had learned, by my junior year, exploring the charms of integral calculus, that there is no imaginable mental felicity more serenely pure than suspended happy absorption in a mathematical problem. Of course I attained no higher than the dregs of the subject; on that grovelling level I would still (in Billy Sunday's violent trope) have had to climb a tree to look a snake in the eye; but I could see that for the mathematician, if for anyone, Time stands still withal; he is winnowed of vanity and sin. French, German, and Latin, and a hasty tincture of Xenophon and Homer (a mere lipwash of Helicon) gave me a zeal for philology and the tongues. I was a member in decent standing of the college classical club, and visions of life as a professor

of languages seemed to me far from unhappy. A compulsory course in philosophy convinced me that there was still much to learn; and I had a delicious hallucination in which I saw myself compiling a volume of commentaries on the various systems of this queen of sciences. *The Grammar of Agnostics*, I think it was to be called: it would be written in a neat and comely hand on thousands of pages of pure white foolscap: I saw myself adding to it night by night, working *ohne Hast, ohne Rast.* And there were other careers, too, as statesman, philanthropist, diplomat, that I considered not beneath my horoscope. I spare myself the careful delineation of these projects, though they would be amusing enough.

But beneath these preoccupations another influence was working its inward way. My paramount interest had always been literary, though regarded as a gentle diversion, not degraded to a bread-and-butter concern. Ever since I had fallen under the superlative spell of R. L. S., in whom the cunning enchantment of the written word first became manifest, I had understood that books did not grow painlessly for our amusement, but were the issue of dexterous and intentional skill. I had thus made a stride from Conan Doyle, Cutcliffe Hyne, Anthony Hope, and other great loves of my earliest teens; those authors' delicious mysteries and picaresques I took for granted, not troubling over their method; but in Stevenson, even to a schoolboy, the conscious artifice and nicety of phrase were puzzlingly apparent. A taste for literature, however, is a very different thing from a determination to undertake the art in person as a means of livelihood. It takes brisk stimulus and power-

ful internal fevers to reduce a healthy youth to such a contemplation. All this is a long story, and I telescope it rigorously, thus setting the whole matter, perhaps, in a false proportion. But the central and operative factor is now at hand.

There was a certain classmate of mine (from Chicago) whose main devotion was to scientific and engineering studies. But since his plan embraced only two years at college before 'going to work,' he was (in the fashion traditionally ascribed to Chicago) speeding up the cultural knick-knacks of his education. So, in our freshman year, he was attending a course on 'English Poets of the Nineteenth Century,' which was, in the regular schedule of things, reserved for sophomores (supposedly riper for matters of feeling). Now I was living in a remote dormitory on the outskirts of the wide campus (that other Eden, demi-paradise, that happy breed of men, that little world!) some distance from the lecture halls and busy heart of college doings. It was the custom of those quartered in this colonial and sequestered outpost to make the room of some central classmate a base for the day, where books might be left between lectures, and so on. With the Chicagoan, whom we will call 'J –,' I had struck up a mild friendship; mostly charitable on his part, I think, as he was from the beginning one of the most popular and influential men in the class, whereas I was one of the rabble. So it was, at any rate; and often in the evening, returning from library or dining-hall on the way to my distant Bœotia, I would drop in at his room, in a lofty corner of old Barclay Hall, to pick

up note-books or anything else I might have left there.

What a pleasant place is a college dormitory at night! The rooms with their green-hooded lights and boyish similarity of decoration, the amiable buzz and stir of a game of cards under festoons of tobacco smoke, the wiry tinkle of a mandolin distantly heard, sudden clatter subsiding again into a general humming quiet, the happy sense of solitude in multitude, these are the partial ingredients of that feeling no alumnus ever forgets. In his pensive citadel, my friend J – would be sitting, with his pipe (one of those new 'class pipes' with inlaid silver numerals, which appear among every college generation toward Christmas time of freshman year). In his lap would be the large green volume (*British Poets of the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Professor Curtis Hidden Page) which was the text-book of that sophomore course. He was reading Keats. And his eyes were those of one who has seen a new planet swim into his ken.

I don't know how many evenings we spent there together. Probably only a few. I don't recall just how we communed, or imparted to one another our juvenile speculations. But I plainly remember how he would sit beside his desk-lamp and chuckle over the Ode to a Nightingale. He was a quizzical and quickly humorous creature, and Keats's beauties seemed to fill him not with melancholy or anguish, but with a delighted prostration of laughter. The 'wormy circumstance' of the Pot of Basil, the Indian Maid nursing her luxurious sorrow, the congealing Beadsman and the palsied beldame Angela – these and a thousand quaintnesses of phrase moved him to a gush of glorious mirth. It was not that he did

not appreciate the poet, but the unearthly strangeness of it all, the delicate contradiction of laws and behaviours known to freshmen, tickled his keen wits and emotions until they brimmed into puzzled laughter. 'Away! Away!' he would cry –

> For I will fly to thee,
> Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
> But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
> Though the dull brain perplexes and retards –

and he would shout with merriment. Beaded bubbles winking at the brim; Throbbing throats' long, long melodious moan; Curious conscience burrowing like a mole; Emprison her soft hand and let her rave; Men slugs and human serpentry; Bade her steep her hair in weird syrops; Poor weak palsy-stricken churchyard thing; Shut her pure sorrow-drops with glad exclaim – such lines were to him a constant and exhilarating excitement. In the very simplicity and unsophistication of his approach to the poet was a virgin *naïveté* of discernment that an Edinburgh Reviewer would rarely attain. Here, he dimly felt, was the great key

> To golden palaces, strange minstrelsy,
> . . . aye, to all the mazy world
> Of silvery enchantment.

And in line after line of Endymion, as we pored over them together, he found the clear happiness of a magic that dissolved everything into lightness and freedom. It is agreeable to remember this man, preparing to be a building contractor, who loved Keats because he made

him laugh. I wonder if the critics have not too insistently persuaded us to read our poet in a black-edged mood? After all, his nickname was 'Junkets.'

So it was that I first, in any transcending sense, fell under the empire of a poet. Here was an endless fountain of immortal drink: here was a history potent to send a young mind from its bodily tenement. The pleasure was too personal to be completely shared; for the most part J – and I read not together, but each by each, he sitting in his morris chair by the desk, I sprawled upon his couch, reading, very likely, different poems, but communicating, now and then, a sudden discovery. Probably I exaggerate the subtlety of our enjoyment, for it is hard to review the unself-scrutinizing moods of freshmanhood. It would be hard, too, to say which enthusiast had the greater enjoyment: he, because these glimpses through magic casements made him merry; I, because they made me sad. Outside, the snow sparkled in the pure winter night; the long lance windows of the college library shone yellow-panelled through the darkness, and there would be the occasional interruption of light-hearted classmates. How perfectly it all chimed into the mood of St. Agnes' Eve! The opening door would bring a gust of lively sound from down the corridor, a swelling jingle of music, shouts from some humorous 'rough-house' (probably those sophomores on the floor below) –

The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone –
The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

It did not take very long for J – to work through the fifty pages of Keats reprinted in Professor Hidden Page's anthology; and then he, a lone and laughing faun among that pack of stern sophomores – so flewed, so sanded, out of the Spartan kind, crook-knee'd and dewlapped like Thessalian bulls – sped away into thickets of Landor, Tennyson, the Brownings. There I, an unprivileged and unsuspected hanger-on, lost their trail, returning to my own affairs. For some reason – I don't know just why – I never 'took' that course in Nineteenth Century Poets, in the classroom at any rate. But just as Mr. Chesterton, in his glorious little book, *The Victorian Age in Literature*, asserts that the most important event in English history was the event that never happened at all (you yourself may look up his explanation), so perhaps the college course that meant most to me was the one I never attended. What it meant to those sophomores of the class of 1909 is another gentle speculation. Three years later, when I was a senior, and those sophomores had left college, another youth and myself were idly prowling about a dormitory corridor where some of those same sophomores had previously lodged. An unsuspected cupboard appeared to us, and rummaging in it we found a pile of books left there, forgotten, by a member of that class. It was a Saturday afternoon, and my companion and I had been wondering how we could raise enough cash to go to town for dinner and a little harmless revel. To shove those books into a suitcase and hasten to Philadelphia by trolly was the obvious caper; and Leary's famous old book-store ransomed the volumes for enough money to provide an excellent dinner at Lauber's,

where, in those days, the thirty-cent bottle of sour claret was considered the true, the blushful Hippocrene. But among the volumes was a copy of Professor Page's anthology, which had been used by one of J–'s companions in that poetry course. This seemed to me too precious to part with, so I retained it; still have it; and have occasionally studied the former owner's marginal memoranda. At the head of The Eve of St. Agnes he wrote: 'Middle Ages. N. Italy. Guelph, Guibilline.' At the beginning of Endymion he recorded: 'Keats tries to be spiritualized by love for celestials.' Against Sleep and Poetry: 'Desultory. Genius in the larval state.' The Ode on a Grecian Urn, he noted: 'Crystallized philosophy of idealism. Embalmed anticipation.' The Ode on Melancholy: 'Non-Gothic. Not of intellect or disease. Emotions.'

Darkling I listen to these faint echoes from a vanished lecture room, and ponder. Did J– keep his copy of the book, I wonder, and did he annotate it with lively commentary of his own? He left college at the end of our second year, and I have not seen or heard from him these thirteen years. The last I knew – six years ago – he was a contractor in an Ohio city; and (is this not significant?) in a letter written then to another classmate, recalling some waggishness of our own sophomore days, he used the phrase 'Like Ruth among the alien corn.'

In so far as one may see turning points in a tangle of yarn, or count dewdrops on a morning cobweb, I may say that a few evenings with my friend J– were the decisive vibration that moved one more minor poet toward the privilege and penalty of Parnassus. One cannot nicely decipher such fragile causes and effects. It was a

year later before the matter became serious enough to enforce abandoning library copies of Keats and buying an edition of my own. And this, too, may have been not unconnected with the gracious influence of the other sex as exhibited in a neighbouring athenæum; and was accompanied by a gruesome spate of florid lyrics: some (happily) secret, and some exposed with needless hardihood in a college magazine. The world, which has looked leniently upon many poetical minorities, regards such frenzies with tolerant charity and forgetfulness. But the wretch concerned may be pardoned for looking back in a mood of lingering enlargement. As Sir Philip Sidney put it, 'Self-love is better than any gilding to make that seem gorgeous wherein ourselves be parties.'

There is a vast deal of nonsense written and uttered about poetry. In an age when verses are more noisily and fluently circulated than ever before, it might seem absurd to plead in the Muse's defence. Yet poetry and the things poets love are pitifully weak to-day. In essence, poetry is the love of life – not mere brutish tenacity of sensation, but a passion for all the honesties that make life free and generous and clean. For two thousand years poets have mocked and taunted the cruelties and follies of men, but to what purpose? Wordsworth said: 'In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time.' Sometimes it

seems as though 'things violently destroyed,' and the people who destroy them, are too strong for the poets. Where, now, do we see any cohesive binding together of humanity? Are we nearer these things than when Wordsworth and Coleridge walked and talked on the Quantock Hills, or on that immortal road 'between Porlock and Linton'? Hardy writes *The Dynasts*, Joseph Conrad writes his great preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'* but do the destroyers hear them? Have you read again, since the War, Gulliver's *Voyage to the Houyhnhnms*, or Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*? These men wrote, whether in verse or prose, in the true spirit of poets; and Swift's satire, which the text-book writers all tell you is so gross and savage as to suggest the author's approaching madness, seems tender and suave by comparison with what we know to-day.

Poetry is the log of man's fugitive castaway soul upon a doomed and derelic planet. The minds of all men plod the same rough roads of sense; and in spite of much knavery, all win at times 'an ampler ether, a diviner air.' The great poets, our masters, speak out of that clean freshness of perception. We hear their voices –

I there before thee, in the country that well thou knowest,
Already arrived am inhaling the odorous air.

So it is not vain, perhaps, to try clumsily to tell how this delicious uneasiness first captured the spirit of one who, if not a poet, is at least a lover of poetry. Thus he first looked beyond the sunset; stood, if not on Parnassus, tiptoe upon a little hill. And overhead a great wind was blowing.

HAVE FAITH IN POETS

An acorn sprouts two ways: one shoot downward into earth, one upward into leaves and sunlight. So, please, with poems. Every poem-bulb gropes doubly: rooting toward the rich soil of truth, lifting into the free air of beauty.

For certainly it is nonsense to say that truth and beauty are the same. Truth is the strong compost in which beauty may sometimes germinate. These paragraphs, for instance, are not poetry; they are only a box of bulls in a wintry cellar; but they are the stuff of which (with labour and luck) poetry might be made.

The essence of poetry is the intuition of strange analogies and surprising similitudes. The restraint of the poet is not to ascribe too much meaning to that which is really insignificant. The courage of the poet is to keep ajar the door that leads into madness. The poet is the Pandora of the mind.

Poetry is like an unexpected noise in the night: the creak of a door, the footstep on the porch, the soft scuffle of a moth against the screen, which rouses every sense to an instant alert. So comes poetry to the drowsy mind, which startles a moment, wonders, and returns to sleep.

Even the most innocent of men's affairs seem doomed to cause suffering. Pushing the lawn-mower through tall wet grass, and enjoying the strong aroma of the morning, I found that the blades had cut a frog in half. I have not forgotten his eyes.

After long dipping into pale grey and blue inks, at last I have found a bottle of real fluid. *Nubian Intense Black* it calls itself – ink worthy to write honourable truth; ink that collaborates with the pen.

So I say to myself that the one essential secret (for me, at any rate) is to have faith in poets, for they speak a language I can understand. They know the meaning of that old Latin phrase *Desiderio pulchriora*: things are more beautiful when we yearn for them: and indeed the man (whoever he was) who first wrote those words is more present to my spirit than many I see daily in my affairs.

Have faith in poets, for they have not been ashamed to tell you that men suffer. They have not been afraid to look life in the face: and often the encounter is more comforting than you have expected.

And the poet out-argues Nature. For Nature's only duty is to be plausible: to cry to men (Oh, golden thrilling voice!): *Yield you to my gallant impulses, be obedient to my genial sophistry: be untroubled, these are the great laws of life.* But the poet appeals to a Higher Plausibility: the very lattice of his cage, he finds, plots the world in lovely little squares. The success is not to outwit Nature (that none can do), but to outwit self; to convince the heart that it is more fun to lose than to win. Do you hear the poets crying that the very essence of Beauty is desire, frustration, non-attainment? Brave souls, they are busy convincing themselves!

So charmingly have they uttered their despairing incantations, even Nature is sometimes half persuaded they are right.

The poet pursues the trouble in your heart as pitilessly as he has ferreted out his own. So, unless you have courage to face it, give him no access.

Did you think that yourself was the only lifelong companion you could ever have? Did you believe that you, solitary you, were the only one who would ever quite understand you? And did you sometimes weary even of that unbearable intimate? All the while the poets knew: they were waiting for you round the corner. Your terrors and disgusts were theirs, too: heats, fiery welcomes, anguishes, denials. They, too, have wooed life with good heart, have seen her eyes darken with exquisite anxiety and yet look bravely straight; have shaken off (for a moment) the heavy armour of triviality; have dared to put away mere laughter – that they might, a little later, laugh with added gust.

The poet is a reporter, interviewing his own heart. As always in interviewing, it is so much easier to remember the questions we asked (how well, we plume ourselves, we phrased them!) than the exact answers given by that Celebrated Stranger. And we, by the mere fact of asking, determined the course and tone of the colloquy. To ask questions is to shake loaded dice. How easy it is to attribute to him surmises or points of view that really sprang from our own habits of thinking.

The older generation (hotly cries a young poet) 'was afraid of beauty.' Ah, my dear, a little hesitation is no inglorious posture before that doorway. Did you think Beauty was so easy and merry a companion? Perhaps you were confusing Beauty with Having a Good Time.

Beauty is lonely company and bitter food. It is 'too like the lightning, which doth cease to be ere one can say it lightens.' And if you pause to consider, you will admit that it exists mostly in memories. Only in the quietness of afterthought can one seem to grasp it, see its outlines, catch some glimpse of its meaning.

For Beauty lies not in ourselves merely, but in some sudden congruence between our lovelier perceptions and the actual lineaments of the world. Then, in that burning breath, we are too flustered to honour the moment. Only the wistful retrospect can sieve and separate those granules of felicity. Time ticks on, ticks on, ticks on: all we can accumulate is memories, and a riper sensibility for future accidents of happiness; which also will, in the very act of arrival, become mere memories. But by saying 'mere' memories we do not degrade them: for these are the very element of art, which is only one way of honouring life. 'Oh, clumsy lackwit mind!' (you are tempted to cry). 'Why was I not aware, why not more sensitive, more prompt to recognize the Perfect Moment when it was here?' But it is idle to chide: we identify Beauty by the way she says good-bye.

Put all your faith in poets. You will find few others to share Beauty with you; and it cannot be borne alone. The poet performs the greatest of social functions: he elucidates the secrets of other hearts by eavesdropping at his own. At the bottom of almost every heart is terror. But it comforts men to know that others are also afraid. It is because we hardly know what we ourselves think that we are endlessly eager to know the

thoughts of others. The poets discover us to ourselves; and they speak not apprehensively, not embarrassed, not beshrewed and distracted by a muddle of affairs, but in that perfection of power and happiness that comes of impassioned solitude. By making us share their sufferings they have eased themselves, and eased us, too.

So I ask for wisdom to be silent when poets are speaking: lest, when they tremble on the syllable of lovely meanings, my cursed garrulous haste divert or dull the dear edge of their wit. How many urgencies they have neglected to tell me the truth; shall not I also shred off some trivialities for the worth of my soul? It is not poets who crush us with meaningless randoms. And I think I know, better than you, what is important for me.

MOBY WALT

Not long ago a friendly correspondent accused me of not being in sympathy with the Younger Generation. I smiled faintly to myself. For is not my favourite (or at any rate one of my favourite poets) the youngest, the most modern, the most generously daring and terribly inscrutable of them all? Yes, I mean Walt Whitman.

An evening with Walt is not an experience to be undertaken too often, nor (as the Prayer Book says of matrimoney) 'lightly, unadvisedly.' It is too exhausting, too like toying with dynamite. In him there are lines – hundreds of them – that pierce clean through to the root of the matter. One test of a really good parson, I have sometimes thought, is this: Could he preach an intelligible sermon on *The Song of Myself*? 'It requireth courage stout.' As G. K. Chesterton said, a number of years ago, 'We have not yet begun to get to the beginning of Whitman.'

That great shaggy tract of the spirit which Walt staked out has not yet been colonized except around its fringes. A whole school of young poets has grown up, settled like bushwhackers on the edges of Walt's territory. 'Promulge the body and the soul,' he said (in his quaint way; and we have been beginning to suspect, sometimes, that perhaps we have been wrong in saying so often that Walt was totally lacking in humour. But that is a topic in itself). Well, how the young poets have promulged them! With terrible promulsions. 'Nor will my poems do good only,' said he; 'they will do just as much evil.' Aye,

indeed. There are terrific things in the Whitman bush. In that back country, where the hardy spirits of young poets go pioneering, stripped down to the bare necessaries of life, there are drought and pestilence. An occasional wanderer comes back witless and haggard, his face darkened with a more than tropical sun. Others come back not at all. But, for the disciplined and stout-hearted, it is well to plunge in with pannikin and billy. In his rough, melodious lines are the seeds of innumerable richness. He jets poem-stuff: effuses it, as he would say. Moby Walt! He became a great poet when he quit being Walter and was Walt.

It is pleasant to imagine what a man like Keats would have thought about Walt. 'Howls restrained by decorum,' said Walt somewhere. Junkets, perhaps, would have found the restraint inadequate. But unless a man once in a while spends an evening really trying to get *The Song of Myself* under his hide, he knows little of what America really means – or might mean. And our imagined parson, preaching a sermon on that amazing testament, or on such a piece as *Starting from Paumanok*, or *Song of the Answerer*, what unsuspected alliance he would find. Walt, a burly old Blücher, coming to the rescue in the very crisis of Waterloo. 'No man has ever yet been half devout enough.' Yes, here is the flag of our disposition, of hopeful green stuff woven. 'The words of my book nothing, the drift of it everything.'

Leaves of Grass fulfils the ultimate test of genius: which is that if it is approached by those incommensurable with it, it will very likely drive them mad. In the absolute sense of the word, the great majority of readers are not 'up' to

it. Walt himself was very positive on this point. 'Stuffed with the stuff that is coarse, and stuffed with the stuff that is fine.' – 'What can be answered, he answers, and what cannot be answered, he shows how it cannot be answered.' – 'Go lull yourself with what you can understand, and with piano tunes. For I lull nobody, and you will never understand me.' The percentage of mania among Whitman devotees is very high. It is, in very truth, a dangerous book. If censors were worth their hire, they would be harking back to Walt, and not worrying about such pale and meagre indiscretions as *Casanova's Homecoming*. And yet very likely it is nobler to be crazed by Walt than never to be crazed at all. 'And when you rise in the morning, you will find what I tell you is so.'

It is a hard lesson he teaches us. It is a long, tough doctrine to ponder, this tossing away of natural and defensive instinct, the decent inquiry *Will people like this? Is it tactful, or will it offend? Will it be misunderstood?* Of course Walt, like every other nourishing viand, needs to be chewed, not just bolted. The gassy indigestion of many groups of young poets has been due to their swallowing Walt in lumps. Mastication promotes the dissolvent juices, mentally as well as physically.

Many of the complaints against Walt have been due equally to this lack of 'grinding' (as the dentists love to say) on the part of hopeful readers. To complain of the garrulous jargon, the grotesque tags of French, the catalogues, is to look a gift Pegasus in the mouth: to be a mere veterinary to the horse with wings. 'I dilate you with tremendous breath.' Let him promulge, let him effuse. Grant him his terrific attempt

to say the unsayable. His proof, as he predicted, has been sternly deferred. It shall be deferred, he said, 'till his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it.' Which, doubtless, will never happen. But the least one can do is read him in his own triumphant, rigorous spirit:

> Resist much, obey little,
> Once unquestioning obedience, once fully enslaved,
> No nation, state, city, ever afterwards resumes its liberty.

I have always wanted to insert 'person' in that third line, just after 'city.'

It is odd, too, that Walt's prose is so little known. The least known American classic, I have often thought. But it is impertinent to be dogmatic on these topics. Of writers Walt perhaps most of all does not transpire through mediation. There he stands, 'aplomb in the midst of irrational things.' 'I will report all heroism from an American point of view.'

THE KEY RING

I KNOW a man who carries in his left-leg trouser pocket a large, heavy key ring, on which there are a dozen or more keys of all shapes and sizes. There is a latchkey, and the key of his private office, and the key of his roll-top desk, and the key of his safe deposit box, and a key to the little mail box at the front door of his flat (he lives in what is known as a pushbutton apartment house), and a key that does something to his motor-car (not being an automobilist, I don't know just what), and a key to his locker at the golf club, and keys of various travelling bags and trunks and filing cases, and all the other keys with which a busy man burdens himself. They make a noble clanking against his thigh when he walks (he is usually in a hurry), and he draws them out of his pocket with something of an imposing gesture when he approaches the ground glass door of his office at ten past nine every morning. Yet sometimes he takes them out and looks at them sadly. They are a mark and symbol of servitude, just as surely as if they had been heated red-hot and branded on his skin.

Not necessarily an unhappy servitude, I hasten to remark, for servitude is not always an unhappy condition. It may be the happiest of conditions, and each of those little metal strips may be regarded as a medal of honour. In fact, my friend does so regard them. He does not think of the key of his roll-top desk as a reminder of hateful tasks that must be done willynilly, but rather as an emblem of hard work that he enjoys and that is worth doing. He does not think of the

latchkey as a mandate that he must be home by seven o'clock, rain or shine; nor does he think of it as a souvenir of the landlord who must be infallibly paid on the first of the month next ensuing. No, he thinks of the latchkey as a magic wand that admits him to a realm of kindness 'whose service is perfect freedom,' as say the fine old words in the prayer book. And he does not think of his safe deposit box as a hateful little casket of leases and life insurance policies and contracts and wills, but rather as the place where he has put some of his own past life into voluntary bondage – into Liberty Bondage – at four and a quarter per cent. Yet, however blithely he may psychologize these matters, he is wise enough to know that he is not a free man. However content in servitude, he does not blink the fact that it is servitude.

'Upon his will he binds a radiant chain,' said Joyce Kilmer in a fine sonnet. However radiant, it is still a chain.

So it is that sometimes, in the lulls of telephoning and signing contracts and talking to salesmen and preparing estimates and dictating letters 'that must get off to-night' and trying to wriggle out of serving on the golf club's house committee, my friend flings away his cigar, gets a corncob pipe out of his desk drawer, and contemplates his key ring a trifle wistfully. This nubby little tyrant that he carries about with him always makes him think of a river in the far Canadian north, a river that he visited once, long ago, before he had built up all the barbed wire of life about his spirit. It was a green lucid river that ran in a purposeful way between long fringes of pine trees. There were sandy shelves

where he and a fellow canoeist with the good gift of silence built campfires and fried bacon, or fish of their own wooing. The name of that little river (his voice is grave as he recalls it) was the Peace; and it was not necessary to paddle if you didn't feel like it. 'The current ran' (it is pathetic to hear him say it) 'from four to seven miles an hour.'

The tobacco smoke sifts and eddies into the carefully labelled pigeonholes of his desk, and his stenographer wonders whether she dare interrupt him to ask whether that word was 'priority' or 'minority' in the second paragraph of the memo to Mr. Ebbsmith. He smells that bacon again; he remembers stretching out on the cool sand to watch the dusk seep up from the valley and flood the great clear arch of green-blue sky. He remembers that there were no key rings in his pocket then, no papers, no letters, no engagements to meet Mr. Fonseca at a luncheon of the Rotary Club to discuss demurrage. He remembers the clear sparkle of the Peace water in the sunshine, its downward swell and slant over many a boulder, its milky vexation where it slid among stones. He remembers what he had said to himself then, but had since forgotten, that no matter what wounds and perplexities the world offers, it also offers a cure for each one if we know where to seek it. Suddenly he gets a vision of the whole race of men, campers out on a swinging ball, brothers in the common motherhood of earth. Born out of the same inexplicable soil, bred to the same problems of star and wind and sun, what absurdity of civilization is it that has robbed men of this sense of kinship? Why he himself, he feels, could enter a Bedouin

tent or an Eskimo snow-hut and find some bond of union with the inmates. The other night, he reflects, he saw moving pictures of some Fiji natives, and could read in their genial grinning faces the same human impulses he knew in himself. What have men done to cheat themselves of the enjoyment of this amazing world? 'We've been cheated!' he cries, to the stenographer's horror.

He thinks of his friends, his partners, his employees, of conductors on trains and waiters in lunch-rooms and drivers of taxicabs. He thinks, in one amazing flash of realization, of all the men and women he has ever seen or heard of – how each one nourishes secretly some little rebellion, some dream of a wider, freer life, a life less hampered, less mean, less material. He thinks how all men yearn to cross salt water, to scale peaks, to tramp until weary under a hot sun. He hears the Peace, in its far northern valley, brawling among stones, and his heart is very low.

'Mr. Edwards to see you,' says the stenographer.

'I'm sorry, sir,' says Edwards, 'but I've had the offer of another job and I think I shall accept it. It's a good thing for a chap to get a change –'

My friend slips the key ring back in his pocket.

'What's this?' he says. 'Nonsense! When you've got a good job, the thing to do is to keep it. Stick to it, my boy. There's a great future for you here. Don't get any of those fool ideas about changing around from one thing to another.'

ROBERT URWICK, the author, was not yet so calloused by success that he was immune from flattery. And so when he received the following letter he was rather pleased:

Mr. Robt. Urwick, dear sir I seen your story in this weeks Saturday Evn Cudgel, not that I can afford to buy journals of that stamp but I pick up the copy on a bench in the park. Now Mr. Urwick I am a poor man but I was brought up a patron of the arts and I am bound to say that story of yours called Brass Nuckles was a fine story and I am proud to compliment you upon it. Mr. Urwick that brings me to another matter upon which I have been intending to write you upon for a long time but did not like to risk an intrusion. I used to dable in literature to some little extent myself if that will lend a fellow feeling for a craftsman in distress. I am a poor man, out of work through no fault of mine but on account of the illness of my wife and my sitting up with her at nights for weeks and weeks I could not hold my job which required mentle concentration of a vigorous sort. Now Mr. Urwick I have a sick wife and seven children to support, and the rent shortly due and the landlord threatens to eject us if I don't pay what I owe. As it happens my wife and I are hoping to be blessed again soon, with our eighth. Owing to my love and devotion for the fine arts we have named all the earlier children for noted authors or writers Rudyard Kipling, W. J. Bryan, Mark Twain, Debs, Irvin Cobb, Walt Mason and Ella Wheeler Wilcox. Now Mr.

Urwick I thought that I would name the next one after you, seeing you have done so much for literature Robert if a boy or Roberta if a girl with Urwick for a middle name thus making you a godfather in a manner of speaking. I was wondering whether you would not feel like making a little godfathers gift for this innocent babe now about to come into the world and to bare your name. Say twenty dollars, but not a check if it can be avoided as owing to tempry ambarrassment I am not holding any bank account, and currency would be easier for me to convert into the necesity of life.

I wrote this letter once before but tore it up fearing to intrude, but now my need compels me to be frank. I hope you will adorn our literature with many more beautiful compositions similar to Brass Nuckles.

Yours truly

Mr. Henry Phillips

454 East 34 St.

Mr. Urwick, after reading this remarkable tribute twice, laughed heartily and looked in his bill-folder. Finding there a crisp ten-dollar note, he folded it into an envelope and mailed it to his admirer, enclosing with it a friendly letter wishing success to the coming infant who was to carry his name.

A fortnight later he found on his breakfast table a very soiled postal card with this message:

Dear and kind friend, the babe arrived and to the joy of all is a boy and has been christened Robert Urwick Phillips. Unfortunately he is a sicly infant and the doctor says he must have port wine at once or he may not survive. His

mother and I were overjoyed at your munificant gift and hope some day to tell the boy of his beanefactor, Mr. Kipling only sent five spot to his namesake. Do you think you could spare five dollars to help pay for port wine?

Yours gratefully

Henry Phillips

Mr. Urwick was a little surprised at the thought of port wine for one so young, but happening to be bound downtown that morning he thought it might be interesting to look in at Mr. Phillips' residence and find out how his godchild was faring. If the child were really in distress he might perhaps contribute a small sum to ensure proper medical care.

The address proved to be a shabby tenement house hedged by saloons. A ragged little girl (he wondered whether she were Ella Wheeler Wilcox Phillips) pointed him to Mr. Phillips's door. Meeting no answer, he entered.

The room was empty – a single room, with a cot bed, an oil stove and a table littered with stationery and stamps. Of Mrs. Phillips, his namesake or the other seven he saw no signs. He advanced to the table.

Evidently Mr. Phillips was not a ready writer and his letters cost him some pains. Several lay open on the table in different stages of composition. They were all exactly the same in wording as the first one Urwick had received. They were addressed to Booth Tarkington, Don Marquis, Ellen Glasgow, Edna Ferber, Agnes Repplier, Holworthy Hall, and Fannie Hurst. Each letter offered to name some coming child after these Parnassians. Near-by lay a pile

of old magazines from which the industrious Mr. Phillips evidently culled the names of his literary favourites.

Urwick smiled grimly and tiptoed from the room. On the stairs he met a fat charwoman. He asked her if Mr. Phillips were married. 'Whisky is his wife and child,' she replied.

A month later Urwick put Phillips into a story which he sold to the *Saturday Evening Cudgel* for $500. When it was published he sent a marked copy of the magazine to the father of Robert Urwick Phillips with the following note:

'Dear Mr. Phillips – I owe you about $490. Come around some day and I'll blow you to lunch.'

A JAPANESE BACHELOR

THE first obligation of one who lives by writing is to write what editors will buy. In so doing, how often one laments that one cannot write exactly what happens. Suppose I were to try it – for once!

I have been lying on the bed – where the landlady has put a dark blue spread, instead of the white one, because I drop my tobacco ashes – smoking, and thinking about a new friend I met to-day. His name is Kenko, a Japanese bachelor of the fourteenth century, who wrote a little book of musings which has been translated under the title *The Miscellany of a Japanese Priest*. His candid reflections are those of a shrewd, learned, humane and somewhat misogynist mind. I have been lying on the bed because his book, like all books that make one ponder deeply on human destiny, causes that feeling of mind-sickness, that swimming pain of the mental faculties – or is it caused by too much strong tobacco?

My acquaintance with Kenko began only last night, when I sat in bed reading Mr. Raymond Weaver's very pleasant article about him in a recent *Bookman*. My last act before turning out the light was to lay the magazine on the table, open at Mr. Weaver's essay, to remind me to get a copy of Kenko the first thing this morning. Happily to-day was Saturday. I don't know what I should have done if it had been Sunday. I felt that I could not wait another day without owning that book. I suspected it was a good deal in the mood of another bachelor, an Anglo-American Caleb of to-day – Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith, whose whimsical *Trivia* belongs on the same shelf.

This morning I tried to argue myself out of the decision. It may be a very expensive book, I thought; it may cost two or three dollars; I have been spending a lot of money lately, and I certainly ought to buy some new undershirts. Moreover, this has been a bad week; I have never written those paragraphs I promised a certain editor, and I haven't paid the rent yet. Why not try to find the book at a library? But I knew the only library where I would have any chance of finding Kenko would be the big pile at Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street, and I could not bear the thought of having to read that book without smoking. I felt instinctively (from what Mr. Weaver had written) that it was the kind of book that requires a pipe.

Well, I thought, I won't decide this too hastily; I'll walk down to the post office (four blocks) and make up my mind on the way. I knew already, however, that if I didn't go downtown for that book it would bother me all day and ruin my work.

I walked down to the post office (to mail to an editor a sonnet I thought fairly well of) saying to myself: That book is imported from England, it may be a big book, it may even cost four dollars. How much better to exhibit the stoic tenacity of all great men, go back to my hall bedroom (which I was temporarily occupying) and concentrate on matters in hand. What right, I said, has a Buddhist recluse, born either in 1281 or 1283, to harass me so? But I knew in my heart that the matter was already decided. I walked back to the corner of Hallbedroom Street, and stood vacillating at the news-stand, pretending to glance over the papers. But across six centuries

the insistent ghost of Kenko had me in its grip. Annoyed, and with a sense of chagrin, I hurried to the subway.

In the dimly lit vestibule of the subway car, a boy of sixteen or so sat on an up-ended suitcase, plunged in a book. I can never resist the temptation to try to see what books other people are reading. This innocent curiosity has led me into many rudenesses, for I am short-sighted and have to stare very close to make out the titles. And usually the people who read books on trollys, subways, and ferries are women. How often I have stalked them warily, trying to identify the volume without seeming too intrusive. That weakness deserves an essay in itself. It has led me into surprising adventures. But in this case my quarry was easy. The lad – I judged him a boarding-school boy going back to school after the holidays – was so absorbed in his reading that it was easy to thrust my face over his shoulder and see the running head on the page – *The Light That Failed.*

I left the subway at Pennsylvania Station. Just to appease my conscience, I looked in at the agreeable Cadmus book-shop on Thirty-third Street to see if by chance they might have a second-hand copy of Kenko. But I knew they wouldn't; it is not the kind of book at all likely to be found second-hand. I tarried here long enough to smoke one cigarette and pay my devoirs to the noble profession of second-hand bookselling. I even thought, a little wildly, of buying a copy of *The Monk* by M. G. Lewis, which I saw there. So does the frenzy rage when once you unleash it. But I decided to be content with paying my devoirs to the proprietor, a friend of mine, and not go on (as the soldier does in Hood's lovely pun) to devour my pay. I

hurried off to the office of the Oxford University Press, Kenko's publishers.

It should be stated, however, that owing to some confusion of doors I got by mistake into the reception room of the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Billiard Table Company, which is on the same corridor as the salesroom of the Oxford Press. It was a pleasant reception room, not very bookish in aspect, but in my agitation I was too eager to feel surprised by the large billiard table in the offing. I somewhat startled a young man at an adding machine by demanding, in a husky voice, a copy of *The Miscellany of a Japanese Priest*. I was rather nervous by this time, lest for some reason I should not be able to buy a copy of Kenko. I feared the publishers might be angry with me for not having made a round of the book-stores first. The young man saw that I was chalking the wrong cue, and forwarded me.

In the office of the Oxford Press I met a very genial reception. I had been, as I say, apprehensive lest they should refuse to sell me the book; or perhaps they might not have a copy. I wondered what credentials I could offer to override their scruples. I had made up my mind to tell them, if they demurred, that I had once published an essay to prove that the best book for reading in bed is the General Catalogue of the Oxford University Press. This is quite true. It is a delightful compilation of several thousand pages, on India paper. But to my pleasant surprise the Oxonians seemed not at all surprised at the sudden appearance of one asking, in a voice a little shaken with emotion, for a copy of the *Miscellany*. Mr. Campion and Mr. Krause, who greeted me, were kindness itself.

'Oh, yes,' they said, 'we have a copy.' And in a minute it lay before me. One of those little green and gold volumes in the Oxford Library of Prose and Poetry. 'How much?' I said. 'A dollar forty.' I paid it joyfully. It is a good price for a book. Once I wrote a book myself that sells (when it does sell) at that figure. When I was at Oxford I used to buy the O. L. P. P. books for (I think) half a crown. In 1917 they were listed at a dollar. Now $1.40. But I fear Kenko's estate doesn't get the advantage of increased royalties.

The first thing to do was to find a place to read the book. My club was fifteen blocks away. The smoking-room of the Pennsylvania Station, where I have done much reading, was three long blocks. But I must dip into Kenko immediately. Down in the hallway I found a shoe-shining stand, with a bowl of indirect light above it. The artist was busy in the barber shop near-by. Admirable opportunity. I mounted the throne and fell to. The first thing I saw was a quaint Japanese woodcut of a buxom maiden washing garments in a rapidly purling stream. She was treading out a petticoat with her bare feet, presumably on a flat stone. In a black storm-cloud above a willow tree a bearded supernatural being, with hands spread in humorous deprecation, gazes down half pleased, half horrified. And the caption is, 'Did not the fairy Kumé lose his supernatural powers when he saw the white legs of a girl washing clothes?' Yet be not dismayed. Kenko is no George Moore.

By and by the shoeshiner came out and found me reading. He was apologetic. 'I didn't know you were here,' he said. 'Sorry to keep you waiting.' Fortunately my shoes

needed shining, as they generally do. He shined them, and I still sat reading. He was puzzled, and tried to make out the title of the book. At that moment I was reading:

'One morning after a beautiful snowfall I sent a letter to a friend's house about something I wished to say, but said nothing at all about the snow. And in his reply he wrote: "How can I listen to a man so base that his pen in writing did not make the least reference to the snow! Your honourable way of expressing yourself I exceedingly regret." How amusing was this answer!'

The shoeshiner was now asking me whether anything was wrong with the polish he had put on my boots, so I thought it best to leave.

In the earlier pages of Kenko's book there are a number of allusions to the agreeableness of intercourse with friends, so I went into a near-by restaurant to telephone to a man whom I wished to know better. He said that he would be happy to meet me at ten minutes after twelve. That left over half an hour. I felt an immediate necessity to tell some one about Kenko, so I made my way to Mr. Nichols's delightful book-shop (which has an open fire) on Thirty-third Street. I showed the book to Mr. Nichols, and we had a pleasant talk, in the course of which he showed me the five facsimile volumes of Dickens's Christmas books, which he had issued. In particular, he read aloud to me the magnificent description of the boiling kettle in the first 'Chirp' of *The Cricket on the Hearth*, and pointed out to me how Dickens fell into rhyme in describing the song of the kettle. This passage Mr. Nichols read to me, standing in front of his fire, in a very musical and sympathetic

tone of voice, which pleased me exceedingly. I was strongly tempted to buy the five little books, and wished I had known of them before Christmas. With a brutal effort at last I pulled out my watch, and found it was a quarter after twelve.

I met my friend at his office, and we walked up Fourth Avenue in a flush of sunshine. From Twenty-fourth to Forty-second Street we discussed the habits of English poets visiting this country. At the club we got on to Bolshevism, and he told me how a bookseller on Lexington Avenue, whose shop is frequented by very outspoken Radicals, had told him that one of these had said, 'The time is coming, and not far away, when the gutters in front of your shop will run with blood as they did in Petrograd.' I thought of some recent bomb outrages in Philadelphia and did not laugh. With such current problems before us, I felt a little embarrassed about turning the talk back so many centuries to Kenko, but finally I got it there. My friend ate chicken hash and tea; I had kidneys and bacon, and cocoa with whipped cream. We both had a coffee éclair. We parted with mutual regret, and I went back to Hallbedroom Street, intending to do some work.

Of course you know that I didn't do it. I lit the gas stove, and sat down to read Kenko. I wished I were a recluse, living somewhere near a plum tree and a clear running water, leisurely penning maxims for posterity. I read about his frugality, his love of the moon and a little music, his somewhat embittered complaints against the folly of men who spend their lives in rushing about swamped in petty affairs, and the sad story of the old priest who was

attacked by a goblin-cat when he came home late at night from a pleasant evening spent in capping verses. I read with special pleasure his seven Self-Congratulations, in which he records seven occasions when he felt that he had really done himself justice. The first of these was when he watched a man riding horseback in a reckless fashion; he predicted that the man would come a cropper, and he did so. The next four self-congratulations refer to times when his knowledge of literary and artistic matters enabled him to place an unfamiliar quotation or assign a painted tablet to the right artist. One tells how he was able to find a man in a crowd when every one else had failed. And the last and most amusing is an anecdote of a Court lady who tried to inveigle him into a flirtation with her maid by sending the latter, richly dressed and perfumed, to sit very close to him when he was at the temple. Kenko congratulates himself on having been adamant. He was no Pepys.

I thought of trying to set down a similar list of self-congratulations for myself. Alas, the only two I could think of were having remembered a telephone number, the memorandum of which I had lost; and having persuaded a publisher to issue a novel which was a great success. (Not written by me, let me add.)

I found my friend Kenko a rather disturbing companion. His condemnation of our busy, racketing life is so damned conclusive! Having recently added to my family, I was distressed by his section 'Against Leaving Any Descendants.' He seems to be devoid of the sentiment of ancestor worship and sacredness of family continuity which we have been taught to associate with the Oriental. And yet there

is always a current of suspicion in one's mind that he is not really revealing his inmost heart. When a bachelor in his late fifties tells us how glad he is never to have had a son, we begin to taste sour grapes.

I went out about six o'clock, and was thrilled by a shaving of shining new moon in the cold blue winter sky – 'the sky with its terribly cold clear moon, which none care to watch, is simply heart-breaking,' says Kenko. As I walked up Broadway I turned back for another look at the moon, and found it hidden by the vast bulk of a hotel. Kenko would have had some caustic remark for that. I went into the Milwaukee Lunch for supper. They had just baked some of their delicious fresh bran muffins, still hot from the oven. I had two of them, sliced and buttered, with a pot of tea. Kenko lay on the table, and the red-headed philosopher who runs the lunch-room spotted him. I have always noticed that 'plain men' are vastly curious about books. They seem to suspect that there is some occult power in them, some mystery that they would like to grasp. My friend, who has the bearing of a prize-fighter, but the heart of an amiable child, came over and picked up the book. He sat down at the table with me and looked at it. I was a little doubtful how to explain matters, for I felt that it was the kind of book he would not be likely to care for. He began spelling it out loud, rather laboriously –

'Section 1. Well! Being born into this world there are, I suppose, many aims which we may strive to attain.'

To my surprise he showed the greatest enthusiasm. So much so that I ordered another pair of bran muffins,

which I did not really want, so that he might have more time for reading Kenko.

'Who was this fellow?' he asked.

'He was a Jap,' I said, 'lived a long time ago. He was mighty thick with the Emperor, and after the Emperor died he went to live by himself in the country, and became a priest, and wrote down his thoughts.'

'I see,' said my friend. 'Just put down whatever came into his head, eh?'

'That's it. All his ideas about the queer things a fellow runs into in life, you know, little bits of philosophy.'

I was a little afraid of using that word 'philosophy,' but I couldn't think of anything else to say. It struck my friend very pleasantly.

'That's it,' he said, 'philosophy. Just as you say, now, he went off by himself and put things down the way they come to him. Philosophy. Sure. Say, that's a good kind of book. I like that kind of thing. I have a lot of books at home, you know. I get home about nine o'clock, and I most always read a bit before I go to bed.'

How I yearned to know what books they were, but it seemed rude to question him.

He dipped into Kenko again, and I wondered whether courtesy demanded that I should order another pot of tea.

'Say, would you like to do me a favour?'

'Sure thing,' I said.

'When you get through with that book, pass it over, will you? That's the kind of thing I've been wanting. Just some little thoughts, you know, something short. I've got a lot of books at home.'

His big florid face gleamed with friendly earnestness.

'Sure thing,' I said. 'Just as soon as I've finished it you shall have it.' I wanted to ask whether he would reciprocate by lending me one of his own books, which would give me some clue to his tastes; but again I felt obscurely that he would not understand my curiosity.

As I went out he called to me again from where he stood by the shining coffee boiler. 'Don't forget, will you?' he said. 'When you're through, just pass it over.'

I promised faithfully, and to-morrow evening I shall take the book in to him. I honestly hope he'll enjoy it. I walked up the bright wintry street, and wondered what Kenko would have said to the endless flow of taxicabs, the elevators and subways, the telephones, and telegraph offices, the news-stands, and especially the plate-glass windows of florists. He would have had some urbane, cynical and delightfully disillusioning remarks to offer. And, as Mr. Weaver so shrewdly says, how he would enjoy *The Way of All Flesh*!

I came back to Hallbedroom Street, and set down these few meditations. There is much more I would like to say, but the partitions in hall bedrooms are thin, and the lady in the next room thumps on the wall if I keep the typewriter going after ten o'clock.

TO A NEW YORKER A HUNDRED YEARS HENCE

I WONDER, old dear, why my mind has lately been going out towards you? I wonder if you will ever read this? They say that wood-pulp paper doesn't last long nowadays. But perhaps some of my grandchildren (with any luck, there should be some born, say twenty-five years hence) may, in their years of tottering caducity, come across this scrap of greeting, yellowed with age. With tenderly cynical waggings of their faded polls, perhaps they will think back to the tradition of the quaint vanished creatures who lived and strove in this city in the year of disgrace, 1921. Poor old granfer (I can hear them say it, with that pleasing note of pity), I can just remember how he used to prate about the heyday of his youth. He wrote pieces for some paper, didn't he? Comically old-fashioned stuff my governor said; some day I must go to the library and see if they have any record of it.

You seem a long way off, this soft September morning, as I sit here and sneeze (will hay fever still exist in 2021, I wonder?) and listen to the chime of St. Paul's ring eleven. Just south of St. Paul's brown spire the girders of a great building are going up. Will that building be there when you read this? What will be the Olympian skyline of your city? Will poor old Columbia University be so far downtown that you will be raising money to move it out of the congested slums of Morningside? Will you look up, as I do now, to the great pale shaft of Woolworth; to the golden boy with wings above Fulton Street? What ships with new names will come slowly and grandly up your

harbour? What new green spaces will your street children enjoy? But something of the city we now love will still abide, I hope, to link our days with yours. There is little true glory in a city that is always changing. New stones, new steeples are comely things; but the human heart clings to places that hold association and reminiscence. That, I suppose, is the obscure cause of this queer feeling that impels me to send you so perishable a message. It is the precious unity of mankind in all ages, the compassion and love felt by the understanding spirit for those, its resting kinsmen, who once were glad and miserable in these same scenes. It keeps one aware of that marvellous dark river of human life that runs, down and down uncountably, to the unexplored seas of Time.

You seem a long way off, I say – and yet it is but an instant, and you will be here. Do you know that feeling, I wonder (so characteristic of our city), that a man has in an elevator bound (let us say) for the eighteenth floor? He sees 5 and 6 and 7 flit by, and he wonders how he can ever live through the interminable time that must elapse before he will get to his stopping-place and be about the task of the moment. It is only a few seconds, but his mind can evolve a whole honeycomb of mysteries in that flash of dragging time. Then the door slides open before him and that instantaneous eternity is gone; he is in a new era. So it is with the race. Even while we try to analyse our present curiosities, they whiff away and disperse. Before we have time to turn three times in our chairs, we shall be the grandparents and you will be smiling at our old-fashioned sentiments.

But we ask you to look kindly on this our city of wonder,

the city of amazing beauties which is also (to any man of quick imagination) an actual hell of haste, din and dishevelment. Perhaps you by this time will have brought back something of that serenity, that reverence for thoughtful things, which our generation lost – and hardly knew it had lost. But even Hell, you must admit, has always had its patriots. There is nothing that hasn't – which is one of the most charming oddities of the race.

And how we loved this strange, mad city of ours, which we knew in our hearts was, to the clear eye of reason and the pure, sane vision of poetry, a bedlam of magical impertinence, a blind byway of monstrous wretchedness. And yet the blacker it seemed to the lamp of the spirit, the more we loved it with the troubled eye of flesh. For humanity, immortal only in misery and mockery, loves the very tangles in which it has enmeshed itself: with good reason, for they are the mark and sign of its being. So you will fail, as we have; and you will laugh, as we have – but not so heartily, we insist; no one has ever laughed the way your tremulous granfers did, old chap! And you will go on about your business, as we did, and be just as certain that you and your concerns are the very climax of human gravity and worth. And will it be any pleasure to you to know that on a soft September morning a hundred years ago your affectionate great-grandsire looked cheerfully out of his lofty kennel window, blew a whiff of smoke, smiled a trifle gravely upon the familiar panorama, knew (with that antique shrewdness of his) a hawk from a handsaw, and then went out to lunch?

IF BUYING A MEAL WERE LIKE BUYING A HOUSE

This Indenture

between A. B., an innkeeper, organized and existing under the laws of good cooking, party of the first part, and C. D., party of the second part, witnesseth:

That the said party of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of $1.50, lawful money of the United States, paid by the said party of the second part, does hereby grant and release unto the said C. D., and his heirs, administrators, and assigns forever,

All that certain group, parcels, or allotments of food, viands, or victuals, situate or to be spread, served, and garnished upon the premises of said A. B., shown and known and commonly designed as one square meal, table d'hôte, together with the drinking water, napkin, ash tray, fingerbowl and hat-and-coat-hanging privileges or easements appurtenant thereto,

And Together With the rights, privileges, and opportunities (as an easement additionally appurtenant to the meal above nominated) to partake, eat, enjoy, and be nourished upon said victuals, and to call for extra pats, parcels, or portions of butter.

Subject to the following restrictions, to wit: That neither the party of the second part, nor his heirs, executors, or assigns, will feast immoderately upon onions, to the confusion of his neighbours; nor will the

said C. D. or his guests smoke any form of tobacco other than cigars and cigarettes, the instrument commonly known as a pipe being offensive to the head-waiter (a man of delicate nurture); nor will said party of the second part covet, retain, nor seek to remove any knives, forks, spoons, or other tableware whatsoever; nor is anything said or implied or otherwise intimated in this covenant to be construed as permitting the party of the second part to carry on loud laughter, song, carnival, nor social uproar; nor unnecessarily, further than is tactful for the procurement of expeditious attention, to endear himself to or otherwise cajole, compliment and ingratiate the waitress.

And Furthermore, that title to said meal does not pass until the party of the second part has conveyed, of his mansuetude and proper charity, a gratuity, fee, honorarium, lagniappe, pourboire, easement or tip of not less than 15 per cent. of the price of said Meal; which easement, while customarily spoken of as a free-will grant or gratuity, is to be constructively regarded as an entail and a necessary encumbrance upon said Meal.

And the said party of the first part covenants with the said party of the second part as follows: That the said C. D. is seized of the said Meal in fee simple, and shall quietly enjoy said Meal subject to the covenants and restrictions and encumbrances hereinbefore set out, subject to the good pleasure of the Head Waiter.

In Witness Whereof these presents are signed,

(*LOC. SIG.*)

A MESSAGE FOR BOONVILLE

WHEN corncob pipes went up from a nickel to six cents, smoking traditions tottered. That was a year or more ago, but one can still recall the indignation written on the faces of nicotine-soaked gaffers who had been buying cobs at a jitney ever since Washington used one to keep warm at Valley Forge. It was the supreme test of our determination to win the war: the price of Missouri meerschaums went up 20 per cent. and there was no insurrection.

Yesterday we went out to buy our annual corncob, and were agreeably surprised to learn that the price is still six cents; but our friend the tobacconist said that it may go up again soon. We took the treasure, gleaming yellow with fresh varnish, back to our kennel, and we are smoking it as we set down these words. A corncob is sadly hot and raw until it is well sooted, but the ultimate flavour is worth persecution.

The corncob pipes we always buy come from Boonville, Mo., and we don't see why we shouldn't blow a little whiff of affection and gratitude toward that excellent town. Moreover, Boonville celebrated its centennial recently: it was founded in 1818. If the map is to be believed, it is on the southern bank of the Missouri River, which is there spanned by a very fine bridge; it is reached by two railroads (Missouri Pacific and M., K. and T.) and stands on a bluff 100 feet above the water. According to the two works of reference nearest to our desk, its population is either 4,252 or 4,377. Perhaps the former census omits the 125 men of the town who are so benighted as to smoke briars or clays.

A MESSAGE FOR BOONVILLE

Delightful town of Boonville, seat of Cooper County, you are well named. How great a boon you have conferred upon a troubled world! Long after more ambitious towns have faded in the memory of many our quiet and soothing gift to humanity will make your name blessed. I like to imagine your shady streets, drowsing in the summer sun, and the rural philosophers sitting on the verandas of your hotels or on the benches of Harley Park ('comprising fifteen acres' – *New International Encyclopædia*), looking out across the brown river and puffing clouds of sweet grey reek. Down by the livery stable on Main Street (there must be a livery stable on Main Street) I can see the old creaky, cane-bottomed chairs (with seats punctured by too much philosophy) tilted against the sycamore trees, ready for the afternoon gossip and shag tobacco. I can imagine the small boys of Boonville fishing for catfish from the piers of the bridge, or bathing down by the steamboat dock (if there is one), and yearning for the day when they, too, will be grown up and old enough to smoke corncobs.

What is the subtle magic of a corncob pipe? It is never as sweet or as mellow as a well-seasoned briar, and yet it has a fascination all its own. It is equally dear to those who work hard and those who loaf with intensity. When you put your nose to the blackened mouth of the hot cob its odour is quite different from that fragrance of the crusted wooden bowl. There is a faint bitterness in it, a sour, plaintive aroma. It is a pipe that seems to call aloud for the accompaniment of beer and earnest argument on factional political matters. It is also the pipe for solitary vigils of hard and concentrated work. It is the pipe that a man

keeps in the drawer of his desk for savage hours of extra toil after the stenographer has powdered her nose and gone home.

A corncob pipe is a humble badge of philosophy, an evidence of tolerance and even humour. It requires patience and good cheer, for it is slow to 'break in.' Those who meditate bestial and brutal designs against the weak and innocent do not smoke it. Probably Hindenburg never saw one. Missouri's reputation for incredulity may be due to the corncob habit. One who is accustomed to consider an argument over a burning nest of tobacco, with the smoke fuming upward in a placid haze, will not accept any dogma too immediately.

There is a singular affinity among those who smoke corncobs. A Missouri meerschaum whose bowl is browned and whose fibre stem is frayed and stringy with biting betrays a meditative and reasonable owner. He will have pondered all aspects of life and be equally ready to denounce any of them, but without bitterness. If you see a man on a street corner smoking a cob, it will be safe to ask him to watch the baby a minute while you slip around the corner. You would even be safe in asking him to lend you a five. He will be safe, too, because he won't have it.

Think, therefore, of the charm of a town where corncob pipes are the chief industry. Think of them stacked up in bright yellow piles in the warehouse. Think of the warm sun and the wholesome sweetness of broad acres that have grown into the pith of the cob. Think of the bright-eyed Missouri maidens who have turned and scooped and varnished and packed them. Think of the airy streets and wide pavements of Boonville, and the corner drug stores

with their shining soda fountains and grape-juice bottles. Think of sitting out on that bluff on a warm evening, watching the broad shimmer of the river slipping down from the sunset, and smoking a serene pipe while the local flappers walk in the coolness wearing crisp, swaying gingham dresses. That's the kind of town we like to think about.

WALT WHITMAN MINIATURES

I

A DECENT respect to the opinions of mankind requires that one should have some excuse for being away from the office on a working afternoon. September sunshine and trembling blue air are not sufficient reasons, it seems. Therefore, if anyone should brutally ask what I was doing the other day dangling down Chestnut Street toward the river, I should have to reply, 'Looking for the *Wenonah*.' The *Wenonah*, you will immediately conclude, is a moving picture theatre. But be patient a moment.

Lower Chestnut Street is a delightful place for one who does not get down there very often. The face of wholesale trade, dingier than the glitter of uptown shops, is far more exciting and romantic. Pavements are cumbered with vast packing-cases; whiffs of tea and spice well up from cool cellars. Below Second Street I found a row of enormous sacks across the kerb, with bright red and green wool pushing through holes in the burlap. Such signs as WOOL, NOILS AND WASTE are frequent. I wonder what noils are? A big sign on Front Street proclaims TEA CADDIES, which has a pleasant grandmotherly flavour. A little brass plate, gleamingly polished, says HONORARY CONSULATE OF JAPAN. Beside immense motor trucks stood a shabby little horse and buggy, restored to service, perhaps, by the war-time shortage of gasoline. It was a typical one-horse shay of thirty years ago.

I crossed over to Camden on the ferryboat *Wildwood*, observing in the course of the voyage her sisters, *Bridgeton*,

Camden, *Salem* and *Hammonton*. It is curious that no matter where one goes, one will always meet people who are travelling there for the first time. A small boy next to me was gazing in awe at the stalwart tower of the Victor Company, and snuffing with pleasure the fragrance of cooking tomatoes that makes Camden savoury at this time of year. Wagonloads of ripe Jersey tomatoes making their way to the soup factory are a jocund sight across the river just now.

Every ferry passenger is familiar with the rapid tinkling of the ratchet wheel that warps the landing-stage up to the level of the boat's deck. I asked the man who was running the wheel where I would find the *Wenonah*. 'She lays over in the old Market Street slip,' he replied, and cheerfully showed me just where to find her. 'Is she still used?' I asked. 'Mostly on Saturday nights and holidays,' he said, 'when there's a big crowd going across.'

The *Wenonah*, as all Camden seafarers know, is a ferry-boat, one of the old-timers, and I was interested in her because she and her sister, the *Beverly*, were Walt Whitman's favourite ferries. He crossed back and forth on them hundreds of times and has celebrated them in several paragraphs in *Specimen Days*. Perhaps this is the place to quote his memorandum dated January 12, 1882, which ought to interest all lovers of the Camden ferry:

'Such a show as the Delawa represented an hour before sundown yesterday evening, all along between Philadelphia and Camden, is worth weaving into an item. It was full

tide, a fair breeze from the south-west, the water of a pale tawny colour, and just enough motion to make things frolicsome and lively. Add to these an approaching sunset of unusual splendour, a broad tumble of clouds, with much golden haze and profusion of beaming shaft and dazzle. In the midst of all, in the clear drab of the afternoon light, there steamed up the river the large new boat, the *Wenonah*, as pretty an object as you could wish to see, lightly and swiftly skimming along, all trim and white, covered with flags, transparent red and blue streaming out in the breeze. Only a new ferryboat, and yet in its fitness comparable with the prettiest product of Nature's cunning, and rivalling it. High up in the transparent ether gracefully balanced and circled four or five great sea hawks, while here below, mid the pomp and picturesqueness of sky and river, swam this creature of artificial beauty and motion and power, in its way no less perfect.'

You will notice that Walt Whitman describes the *Wenonah* as being white. The Pennsylvania ferry-boats, as we know them, are all the brick-red colour that is familiar to the present generation. Perhaps older navigators of the Camden crossing can tell us whether the boats were all painted white in a less smoky era?

The *Wenonah* and the *Beverly* were lying in the now unused ferry slip at the foot of Market Street, alongside the great Victor Talking Machine works. Picking my way through an empty yard where some carpentering was going on, I found a deserted pier that overlooked the two old vessels and gave a fair prospect on to the river and the profile of Philadelphia. Sitting there on a pile of pebbles,

I lit a pipe and watched the busy panorama of the river. I made no effort to disturb the normal and congenial lassitude that is the highest function of the human being: no Hindoo philosopher could have been more pleasantly at ease. (O. Henry, one remembers, used to insist that what some of his friends called laziness was really 'dignified repose.') Two elderly coloured men were loading gravel on to a cart not far away. I was a little worried as to what I could say if they asked what I was doing. In these days casual loungers along docksides may be suspected of depth bombs and high treason. The only truthful reply to any question would have been that I was thinking about Whitman. Such a remark, if uttered in Philadelphia, would undoubtedly have been answered by a direction to the chocolate factory on Race Street. But in Camden every one knows about Walt. Still, the coloured men said nothing beyond returning my greeting. Their race, wise in simplicity, knows that loafing needs no explanation and is its own excuse.

If Walt could revisit the ferries he loved so well, in New York and Philadelphia, he would find the former strangely altered in aspect. The New York skyline wears a very different silhouette against the sky, with its marvellous peaks and summits drawing the eye aloft. But Philadelphia's profile is (I imagine) not much changed. I do not know just when the City Hall tower was finished: Walt speaks of it as 'three-fifths built' in 1879. That, of course, is the dominant unit in the view from Camden. Otherwise there are few outstanding elements. The gradual rise in height of the buildings, from Front Street gently ascending up to Broad, gives no startling contrast

of elevation to catch the gaze. The spires of the older churches stand up like soft blue pencils, and the massive cornices of the Curtis and Drexel buildings catch the sunlight. Otherwise the outline is even and well-massed in a smooth ascending curve.

It is curious how a man can stamp his personality upon earthly things. There will always be pilgrims to whom Camden and the Delaware ferries are full of excitement and meaning because of Walt Whitman. Just as Stratford is Shakespeare, so is Camden, Whitman. Some supercilious observers, flashing through on the way to Atlantic City, may only see a town in which there is no delirious and seizing beauty. Let us remind them of Walt's own words:

'A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole world.'

And as I came back across the river, and an airplane hovered over us at a great height, I thought how much we need a Whitman to-day, a poet who can catch the heart and meaning of these grievous bitter years, who can make plain the surging hopes that throb in the breasts of men. The world has not flung itself into agony without some unexpressed vision that lights the sacrifice. If Walt Whitman were here he would look on this new world of moving pictures and gasoline engines and U-boats and tell us what it means. His great heart, which with all its garrulous fumbling had caught the deep music of human service and fellowship, would

have had true and fine words for us. And yet he would have found it a hard world for one of his strolling meditative observancy. A speeding motor truck would have run him down long ago!

As I left the ferry at Market Street I saw that the Norwegian steamer *Taunton* was unloading bananas at the Ericsson pier. Less than a month ago she picked up the survivors of the schooner *Madrugada*, torpedoed by a U-boat off Winterquarter Shoal. On the *Madrugada* was a young friend of mine, a Dutch sailor, who told me of the disaster after he was landed in New York. To come unexpectedly on the ship that had rescued him seemed a great adventure. What a poem Walt Whitman could have made of it!

II

It is a weakness of mine – not a sinful one, I hope – that whenever I see anyone reading a book in public I am agog to find out what it is. Crossing over to Camden this morning a young woman on the ferry was absorbed in a volume, and I couldn't resist peeping over her shoulder. It was *Hans Brinker*. On the same boat were several schoolboys carrying copies of Myer's *History of Greece*. Quaint, isn't it, how our schools keep up the same old bunk! What earthly use will a smattering of Greek history be to those boys? Surely to our citizens of the coming generation the battles of the Marne will be more important than the scuffle at Salamis.

My errand in Camden was to visit the house on Mickle Street where Walt Whitman lived his last years. It is now occupied by Mrs. Thomas Skymer, a friendly Italian

woman, and her family. Mrs. Skymer graciously allowed me to go through the downstairs rooms.

I don't suppose any literary shrine on earth is of more humble and disregarded aspect than Mickle Street. It is a little cobbled byway, grimed with drifting smoke from the railway yards, littered with wind-blown papers and lined with small wooden and brick houses sooted almost to blackness. It is curious to think, as one walks along that bumpy brick pavement, that many pilgrims from afar have looked forward to visiting Mickle Street as one of the world's most significant altars. As Chesterton wrote once, 'We have not yet begun to get to the beginning of Whitman.' But the wayfarer of to-day will find Mickle Street far from impressive.

The little house, a two-story frame cottage, painted dark brown, is numbered 330. (In Whitman's day it was 328.) On the pavement in front stands a white marble stepping-block with the carved initials W. W. – given to the poet, I dare say, by the same friends who bought him a horse and carriage. A small sign, in English and Italian, says : *Thomas A. Skymer, Automobiles to Hire on Occasions.* It was with something of a thrill that I entered the little front parlour where Walt used to sit, surrounded by his litter of papers and holding forth to faithful listeners. One may safely say that his was a happy old age, for there were those who never jibbed at protracted audience.

A description of that room as it was in the last days of Whitman's life may not be uninteresting. I quote from the article published by the Philadelphia *Press* of March 27, 1892, the day after the poet's death:

'Below the windowsill a four-inch pine shelf is swung, on which rests a bottle of ink, two or three pens and a much-rubbed spectacle case.'

(The shelf, I am sorry to say, is no longer there.)

'The table – between which and the wall is the poet's rocker covered with a worsted afghan, presented to him one Christmas by a bevy of college girls who admired his work – is so thickly piled with books and magazines, letters and the raffle of a literary desk that there is scarcely an inch of room upon which he may rest his paper as he writes. A volume of Shakespeare lies on top of a heaping full waste basket that was once used to bring peaches to market, and an ancient copy of Worcester's Dictionary shares places in an adjacent chair with the poet's old and familiar soft grey hat, a newly darned blue woolen sock and a shoe-blacking brush. There is a paste bottle and brush on the table and a pair of scissors, much used by the poet, who writes, for the most part, on small bits of paper and parts of old envelopes and pastes them together in patchwork fashion.'

In spite of a careful examination, I could find nothing in the parlour at all reminiscent of Whitman's tenancy, except the hole for the stovepipe under the mantel. One of Mrs. Skymer's small boys told me that 'He' died in that room. Evidently small Louis Skymer didn't in the least know who 'He' was, but realized that his home was in some vague way connected with a mysterious person whose memory occasionally attracts inquirers to the house.

Behind the parlour is a dark little bedroom, and then the kitchen. In a corner of the backyard is a curious

thing: a large stone or terra cotta bust of a bearded man, very much like Whitman himself, but the face is battered and the nose broken, so it would be hard to assert this definitely. One of the boys told me that it was in the yard when they moved in a year or so ago. The house is a little dark, standing between two taller brick neighbours. At the head of the stairs I noticed a window with coloured panes, which lets in spots of red, blue, and yellow light. I imagine that this patch of vivid colour was a keen satisfaction to Walt's acute senses. Such is the simple cottage that one associates with America's literary declaration of independence.

The other Whitman shrine in Camden is the tomb in Harleigh Cemetery, reached by the Haddonfield trolly. Doctor Oberholtzer, in his *Literary History of Philadelphia*, calls it 'tawdry,' to which I fear I must demur. Built into a quiet hillside in that beautiful cemetery, of enormous slabs of rough-hewn granite with a vast stone door standing symbolically ajar, it seemed to me grotesque, but greatly impressive. It is a weird pagan cromlech, with a huge triangular boulder above the door bearing only the words WALT WHITMAN. Palms and rubber plants grow in pots on the little curved path leading up to the tomb; above it is an uncombed hillside and trees flickering in the air. At this tomb, designed (it is said) by Whitman himself, was held that remarkable funeral ceremony on March 30, 1892, when a circus tent was not large enough to roof the crowd, and peanut vendors did business on the outskirts of the gathering. Perhaps it is not amiss to recall what Bob Ingersoll said on that occasion:

'He walked among verbal varnishers and veneerers, among literary milliners and tailors, with the unconscious dignity of an antique god. He was the poet of that divine democracy that gives equal rights to all the sons and daughters of men. He uttered the great American voice.'

And though one finds in the words of the naïve Ingersoll the squeaking timber of the soapbox, yet even a soapbox does lift a man a few inches above the level of the clay.

Well, the Whitman battle is not over yet, nor ever will be. Though neither Philadelphia nor Camden has recognized 330, Mickle Street, as one of the authentic shrines of our history (Lord, how trimly dight it would be if it were in New England!), Camden has made a certain amend in putting Walt into the gay mosaic that adorns the portico of the new public library in Cooper Park. There, absurdly represented in an austere black cassock, he stands in the following frieze of great figures: Dante, Whitman, Molière, Gutenberg, Tyndale, Washington, Penn, Columbus, Moses, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Shakespeare, Longfellow and Palestrina. I believe that there was some rumpus as to whether Walt should be included; but, anyway, there he is.

You will make a great mistake if you don't ramble over to Camden some day and fleet the golden hours in an observant stroll. Himself the prince of loafers, Walt taught the town to loaf. When they built the new post office over there they put round it a ledge for philosophic lounging, one of the most delightful archi-

tectural features I have ever seen. And on Third Street, just around the corner from 330, Mickle Street, is the oddest plumber's shop in the world. Mr. George F. Hammond, a Civil War veteran, who knew Whitman and also Lincoln, came to Camden in '69. In 1888 he determined to build a shop that would be different from anything on earth, and well he succeeded. Perhaps it is symbolic of the shy and harassed soul of the plumber, fleeing from the unreasonable demands of his customers, for it is a kind of Gothic fortress. Leaded windows, gargoyles, masculine medusa heads, a sallyport, loopholes and a little spire. I called in to talk to Mr. Hammond, and he greeted me graciously. He says that people have come all the way from California to see his shop, and I can believe it. It is the work of a delightful and original spirit who does not care to live in a demure hutch like all the rest of us, and has really had some fun out of his whimsical little castle. He says he would rather live in Camden than in Philadelphia, and I dare say he's right.

III

Something in his aspect as he leaned over the railing near me drew me on to speak to him. I don't know just how to describe it except by saying that he had an understanding look. He gave me the impression of a man who had spent his life in thinking and would understand me, whatever I might say. He looked like the kind of man to whom one would find one's self saying wise and thoughtful things. There are some people, you know, to whom it is impossible to speak wisdom even if you

should wish to. No spirit of kindly philosophy speaks out of their eyes. You find yourself automatically saying peevish or futile things that you do not in the least believe.

The mood and the place were irresistible for communion. The sun was warm along the river front and my pipe was trailing a thin whiff of blue vapour out over the gently fluctuating water, which clucked and sagged along the slimy pilings. Behind us the crash and banging of heavy traffic died away into a dreamy undertone in the mild golden shimmer of the noon hour.

The old man was apparently lost in reverie, looking out over the river toward Camden. He was plainly dressed in coat and trousers of some coarse weave. His shirt, partly unbuttoned under the great white sweep of his beard, was of grey flannel. His boots were those of a man much accustomed to walking. A weather-stained sombrero was on his head. Beneath it his thick white hair and whiskers wavered in the soft breeze. Just then a boy came out from the near-by ferry-house carrying a big crate of daffodils, perhaps on their way from some Jersey farm to an uptown florist. We watched them shining and trembling across the street, where he loaded them on to a truck. The old gentleman's eyes, which were a keen grey blue, caught mine as we both turned from admiring the flowers.

I don't know just why I said it, but they were the first words that popped into my head. 'And then my heart with pleasure fills and dances with the daffodils,' I quoted.

He looked at me a little quizzically.

'You imported those words on a ship,' he said. 'Why don't you use some of your own instead?'

I was considerably taken aback. 'Why, I don't know,' I hesitated. 'They just came into my head.'

'Well, I call that bad luck,' he said, 'when some one else's words come into a man's head instead of words of his own.'

He looked about him, watching the scene with rich satisfaction. 'It's good to see all this again,' he said. 'I haven't loafed around here for going on thirty years.'

'You've been out of town?' I asked.

He looked at me with a steady blue eye in which there was something of humour and something of sadness.

'Yes, a long way out. I've just come back to see how the Great Idea is getting along. I thought maybe I could help a little.'

'The Great Idea?' I queried, puzzled.

'The value of the individual,' he said. 'The necessity for every human being to be able to live, think, act, dream, pray for himself. Nowadays I believe you call it the League of Nations. It's the same thing. Are men to be free to decide their fate for themselves or are they to be in the grasp of irresponsible tyrants, the hell of war, the cruelties of creeds, executive deeds just or unjust, the power of personality just or unjust? What are your poets, your young Libertads, doing to bring about the Great Idea of perfect and free individuals?'

I was rather at a loss, but happily he did not stay for an answer. Above us an American flag was fluttering on a staff, showing its bright ribs of scarlet clear and vivid against the sky.

'You see that flag of stars,' he said, 'that thick-sprinkled bunting? I have seen that flag stagger in the agony of

threatened dissolution, in years that trembled and reeled beneath us. You have only seen it in the days of its easy, sure triumphs. I tell you, now is the day for America to show herself, to prove her dreams for the race. But who is chanting the poem that comes from the soul of America, the carol of victory? Who strikes up the marches of Libertad that shall free this tortured ship of earth? Democracy is the destined conqueror, yet I see treacherous lip-smiles everywhere and death and infidelity at every step. I tell you, now is the time of battle, now the time of striving. I am he who tauntingly compels men, women, nations, crying, "Leap from your seats and contend for your lives!" I tell you, produce great Persons; the rest follows.'

'What do you think about the covenant of the League of Nations?' I asked. He looked out over the river for some moments before replying and then spoke slowly, with halting utterance that seemed to suffer anguish in putting itself into words.

'America will be great only if she builds for all mankind,' he said. 'This plan of the great Libertad leads the present with friendly hand toward the future. But to hold men together by paper and seal or by compulsion is no account. That only holds men together which aggregates all in a living principle, as the hold of the limbs of the body or the fibres of plants. Does this plan answer universal needs? Can it face the open fields and the seaside? Will it absorb into me as I absorb food, air, to appear again in my strength, gait, face? Have real employments contributed to it – original makers, not mere amanuenses? I think so, and therefore I say to you, now is the day to fight for it.

'Well,' he said, checking himself, 'there's the ferry coming in. I'm going over to Camden to have a look around on my way back to Harleigh.'

'I'm afraid you'll find Mickle Street somewhat changed,' I said, for by this time I knew him.

'I love changes,' he said.

'Your centennial comes on May 31,' I said. 'I hope you won't be annoyed if Philadelphia doesn't pay much attention to it. You know how things are around here.'

'My dear boy,' he said, 'I am patient. The proof of a poet shall be sternly deferred till his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it. I have sung the songs of the Great Idea and that is reward in itself. I have loved the earth, sun, animals, I have despised riches, I have given alms to every one that asked, stood up for the stupid and crazy, devoted my income and labour to others, hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had patience and indulgence toward the people, taken off my hat to nothing known or unknown, gone freely with powerful uneducated persons, and I swear I begin to see the meaning of these things –'

'All aboard!' cried the man at the gate of the ferry-house.

He waved his hand with a benign patriarchal gesture and was gone.

A SEPARATION

I HAVEN'T seen her for four days. It's four days since her first night (in a manner of speaking) away from home. . . . This, by the way, is for parents only. Others won't understand.

Babblings, as I call her when we are alone, is nine months old. As you know, about that age these minuscule creatures are likely to be turned over to the care of a nurse. Well, now, *how* can I put it delicately? These outspoken medical fellows would simply say she had been weaned and leave it at that. The point is that the small creature now sleeps in the nursery, and no longer in the bedroom with her parents. And so if you run for town early in the morning and don't get back at night until after dark, when will you see her? Not at all, until the week-end.

I haven't seen her for four days: and walking home the other evening I realized what I had been missing. Why, her, the absurd microcosm. That little yammer, or (let's be honest) that sudden rousing squall, beginning in the middle-night as suddenly as a locomotive blows off steam; ending with equal suddenness when a familiar form leaned over the crib; those queer rhythmical whimpers of cheer, when, completely pleased, she was pushing herself down the psychic slopes of sleep; the excitement when she first rolled over, raised her head like a turtle and gazed about with an air of triumph (until she learned that, also like the slug testudo, she couldn't get back) . . . these were what I lacked.

I *said* you wouldn't understand, didn't I?

But what I missed most of all were those private conferences we had, before breakfast, while I was getting dressed. The rest of the family being already at table, and cries coming aloft ('You'll miss your train'), what was I doing? Well, that was the time when I was calling her. . . . I told you what I called her. We were alone. As I was tying my tie, she could watch me from the crib. I don't know just what she was laughing at. But anyhow, and since I'm not going to go into details, we had a few brief merriments together. We both understood them perfectly, each in our own way. She won't tell about them – no, not ever – because she won't remember them: and I am not one to let loose secrets shared with a lady, even the youngest. No, we'll respect an eternity of taciturnity. I'll have to confess, however, that there was just a little element of trickery on my part. Because, dressing finished, tie knotted, hair brushed, all ready to make a break for the cup of coffee and the train, I wasn't quite honest. I gave her a kinsprit grin, and said (this was pretty bad): 'I'll be right back.' I think she got the impression I was just going out of the room for a moment or so and would return to be entertained further. In that way I got off without distressing her. And then I never did come back, not till night-time. It wasn't quite straight, maybe. I remember that her eyes followed me to the door.

This is bad; because I'm giving the impression that she liked me as much as I liked her. That's not so, of course. In a few seconds she had forgotten me entirely. She had far better company, all day long. The best company in the world, indeed. And of course I had plenty to think about, myself. But I didn't realize,

until the bedroom was so painfully quiet, how much she meant. . . . And I haven't seen her for four days, not since she spent her first night away from home, in a manner of speaking.

MANY critics have spoken – and many more will speak – of Doughty's *Arabia* as one of the world's great travel books. What they have said is true; though we doubt if that terrible, exhausting, and fiery work will ever be popular, though it may readily become fashionable.

But there is a book of travel (or travail) still to be written, dealing with a wilderness even more appalling than the Arabian desert, a book that might possibly be just as great as – or greater than – Doughty's. That is the book, unwritable perhaps, that would deal adequately, honestly, with the terrible, magnificent jungle of New York. Perhaps desert is a better word for it than jungle, for in a desert the sand leaves no trace of your passage. But I stick to the idea of a jungle, for it has strange and fantastic analogies. Through these vast thickets, trudging elate or despairing, each explorer beats out his own little paths of precarious safety. Lie covert near where the spiritual tracks cross one another – in a newspaper office, for example, a bewildering ganglion of threaded human nerves and passions – and watch the inhabitants of the forest padding softly on their strange quests. For, like the wild animals, each has his own secret, instinctive way towards some Drinking Place. Or you may stand, if you prefer, dumbly contemplating the pitiful brightness on the steel-plated subway stairs – brightness worn by millions of tragic, hopeful feet.

Like aisles of darkness under the dense tropic foliage are those subway tunnels, green and red lights brilliant

as parakeets in the gloom. Bright as clumps of poisonous orchids are the little news-kennels with their coloured magazine covers. Poison, poison to the spirit, the thoughtful explorer may mutter to himself, and stoutly avert the eye. At every turning in the jungle, beside every thicket, or under the huge spreading palm-tree girders of the Pennsylvania train shed, he may imagine he hears the sudden soft whirr of Time's savage arrow, feathered so prettily, flicked into the body of some fellow traveller. The shrill call of the traffic cop's whistle, is it not dreadfully like the cry of some threatening parrot or macaw, perched ironically above the throng? That cry halts even the great pachyderms and the chattering monkeys, all on their way to some Drinking Place of their own. Like a huge yellow python you can see the L train winding among the tall bamboo groves of buildings. And you must struggle with every one, even with your own indolent soul, for command of your spirit in that monstrous jungle.

The analogies are terrible indeed! In that frenzy of haste and friendliness, where the traveller must even struggle against his well-loved comrades for the endangered command of his own soul; where silly half-truths are so fashionable and so well rewarded that even the desire to write honourable candour easily grows dim; where sometimes one almost attains the ultimate and most fearful disillusion – that God Himself is in a hurry; in that jungle be wary and be calm, my soul. The whole jungle conspires and rustles with menace; it is thick with beauty and terror; how swiftly the creepers wind you in if you try to pause for reason and peace. Strange

enemies, in the loveliest of sleek stripings, lie on the branching limbs overhead, waiting to spring; crouch in the long grass, eager to strike. In that jungle men cannot even worship God without quarrelling about it. The strangest laughters are heard, sounding through the stillness; the lapping of the thirsty creatures is anxiously suspended as they raise their heads and listen to the queer voices of the night.

Magnificent, thrilling, inexplicable wilderness! Chop through it your own little paths, endangered soul; find your own strange hidden waters of refreshment. And pay no heed to any wisdom save your own. There are the quaintest flutings and voices of decoy. The owl has a beguiling murmur; the adder a shining skin. Be childish in your sullen wisdom, O wandering spirit! It is of this wilderness that some day a book might be written. Yet perhaps it has been written already – the greatest book of our time, maybe, if your mind runs that way. You can always tell when a book is really great – does it become a classic for children? For men, terribly fearing the sharp wisdom of fables, always soften them by pretending they were written for children. It happened to Swift, for instance. And the greatest book of our time, perhaps, is *The Jungle Book*.

Magnificent, terrible jungle of New York! Like Mowgli, you must learn to run with the wolves, and learn to love them, for they are lovable and brave. But be wary, O soul. There will come a time when you must return to live with men.

DOORS

THE opening and closing of doors are the most significant actions of man's life. What a mystery lies in doors!

No man knows what awaits him when he opens a door. Even the most familiar room, where the clock ticks and the hearth glows red at dusk, may harbour surprises. The plumber may actually have called (while you were out) and fixed that leaking faucet. The cook may have had a fit of the vapours and demanded her passports. The wise man opens his front door with humility and a spirit of acceptance.

Which one of us has not sat in some anteroom and watched the inscrutable panels of a door that was full of meaning? Perhaps you were waiting to apply for a job; perhaps you had some 'deal' you were ambitious to put over. You watched the confidential stenographer flit in and out, carelessly turning that mystic portal which, to you, revolved on hinges of fate. And then the young woman said, 'Mr. Cranberry will see you now.' As you grasped the knob the thought flashed, 'When I open this door again, what will have happened?'

There are many kinds of doors. Revolving doors for hotels, shops and public buildings. These are typical of the brisk, bustling ways of modern life. Can you imagine John Milton or William Penn skipping through a revolving door? Then there are the curious little slatted doors that still swing outside denatured bar-rooms and extend only from shoulder to knee. There are trap-doors, sliding doors, double doors, stage doors, prison

doors, glass doors. But the symbol and mystery of a door resides in its quality of concealment. A glass door is not a door at all, but a window. The meaning of a door is to hide what lies inside; to keep the heart in suspense.

Also, there are many ways of opening doors. There is the cheery push of elbow with which the waiter shoves open the kitchen door when he bears in your tray of supper. There is the suspicious and tentative withdrawal of a door before the unhappy book agent or pedlar. There is the genteel and carefully modulated recession with which footmen swing wide the oaken barriers of the great. There is the sympathetic and awful silence of the dentist's maid who opens the door into the operating room and, without speaking, implies that the doctor is ready for you. There is the brisk cataclysmic opening of a door when the nurse comes in, very early in the morning – 'It's a boy!'

Doors are the symbol of privacy, of retreat, of the mind's escape into blissful quietude or sad secret struggle. A room without doors is not a room, but a hall-way. No matter where he is, a man can make himself at home behind a closed door. The mind works best behind closed doors. Men are not horses to be herded together. Dogs know the meaning and anguish of doors. Have you ever noticed a puppy yearning at a shut portal? It is a symbol of human life.

The opening of doors is a mystic act: it has in it some flavour of the unknown, some sense of moving into a new moment, a new pattern of the human rigmarole. It includes the highest glimpses of mortal gladness: reunions, reconciliations, the bliss of lovers long parted.

Even in sadness, the opening of a door may bring relief: it changes and redistributes human forces. But the closing of doors is far more terrible. It is a confession of finality. Every door closed brings something to an end. And there are degrees of sadness in the closing of doors. A door slammed is a confession of weakness. A door gently shut is often the most tragic gesture in life. Every one knows the seizure of anguish that comes just after the closing of a door, when the loved one is still near, within sound of voice, and yet already far away.

The opening and closing of doors is a part of the stern fluency of life. Life will not stay still and let us alone. We are continually opening doors with hope, closing them with despair. Life lasts not much longer than a pipe of tobacco, and destiny knocks us out like the ashes.

The closing of a door is irrevocable. It snaps the packthread of the heart. It is no avail to reopen, to go back. Pinero spoke nonsense when he made Paula Tanqueray say, 'The future is only the past entered through another gate.' Alas, there is no other gate. When the door is shut, it is shut forever. There is no other entrance to that vanished pulse of time. 'The moving finger writes, and having writ' –

There is a certain kind of door-shutting that will come to us all. The kind of door-shutting that is done very quietly, with the sharp click of the latch to break the stillness. They will think then, one hopes, of our unfulfilled decencies rather than of our pluperfected misdemeanours. Then they will go out and close the door.

STIRLINGSHIRE
Rural Library
EDUCATION AUTHORITY

STIRLING DISTRICT LIBRARY
STIRLINGSHIRE EDUCATION AUTHORITY.
COUNTY LIBRARY.

This book should be returned on or before the latest date entered below. If desired, an extension of the loan period may be granted.

Tel.

DATE OF RETURN.	DATE OF RETURN.	DATE OF RETURN.
22 JAN 43		
29 SEP 1945		
21. NOV. 1952		
28. NOV. 1952		

WITHDRAWN

STIRLINGSHIRE EDUCATION AUTHORITY.

No..... LIBRARY SCHEME. Class.....

Vols.....

Readers are requested to take great care of the books while in their possession, and to point out any defect that they may observe in them to the Local Librarian.

All books should be returned to the Library within fourteen days from the date of issue; but an extension of the period of loan will be granted when desired.

If Infectious Disease broke... ...y house where there is a librar... ...Librarian should be notified. ... ...returned to the Local Library un... ...ceived. No fine will be payable...

Student... ...raries are reminded that the sp... ...Library for Scottish Students a... ...ns for service from this Centra... ...ed by particulars as to the book... ...ns should be made through the...

12975
874
Morley
Safety Pins

12975